NAHUSHA

Even though Nahusha, the son of King Ayus and Queen Indumati, was spirited away at birth to be killed by the demon, Hunda, he lived on to achieve immortality. Married to Ashokasundari, the beautiful daughter of Shiva and Parvati, he was elected to be the king of heaven. And then his mortal mind succumbed to the sin of pride. The stories of Nahusha are taken from the Padma Purana and the Mahabharata.

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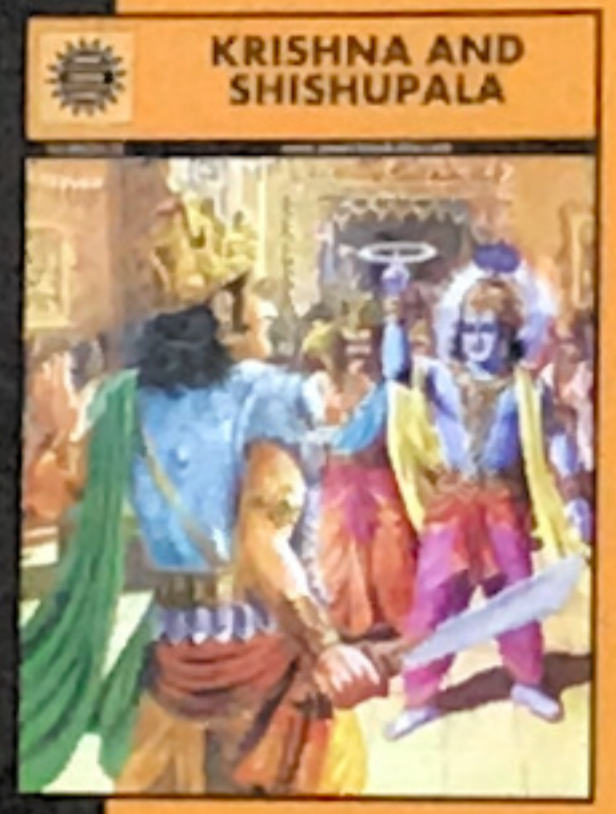
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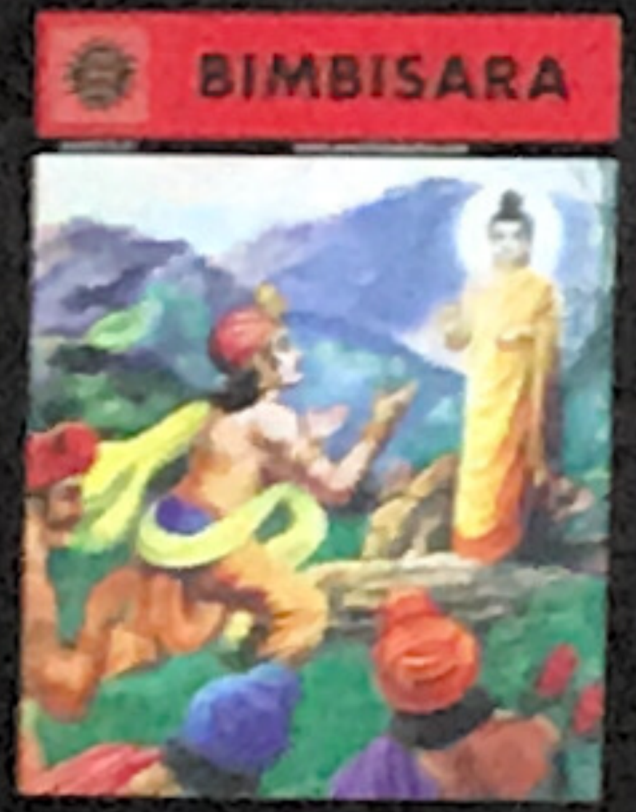

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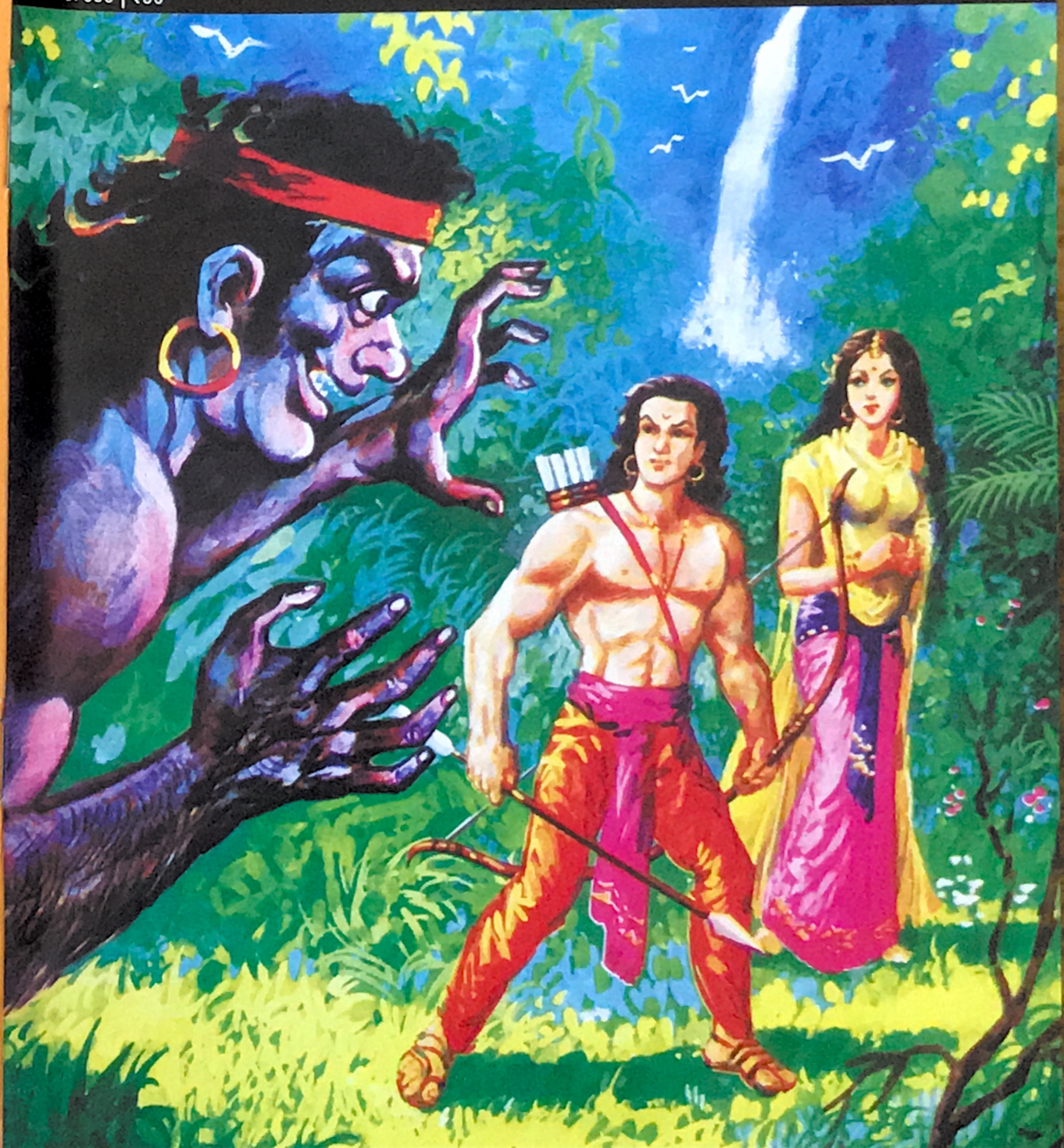
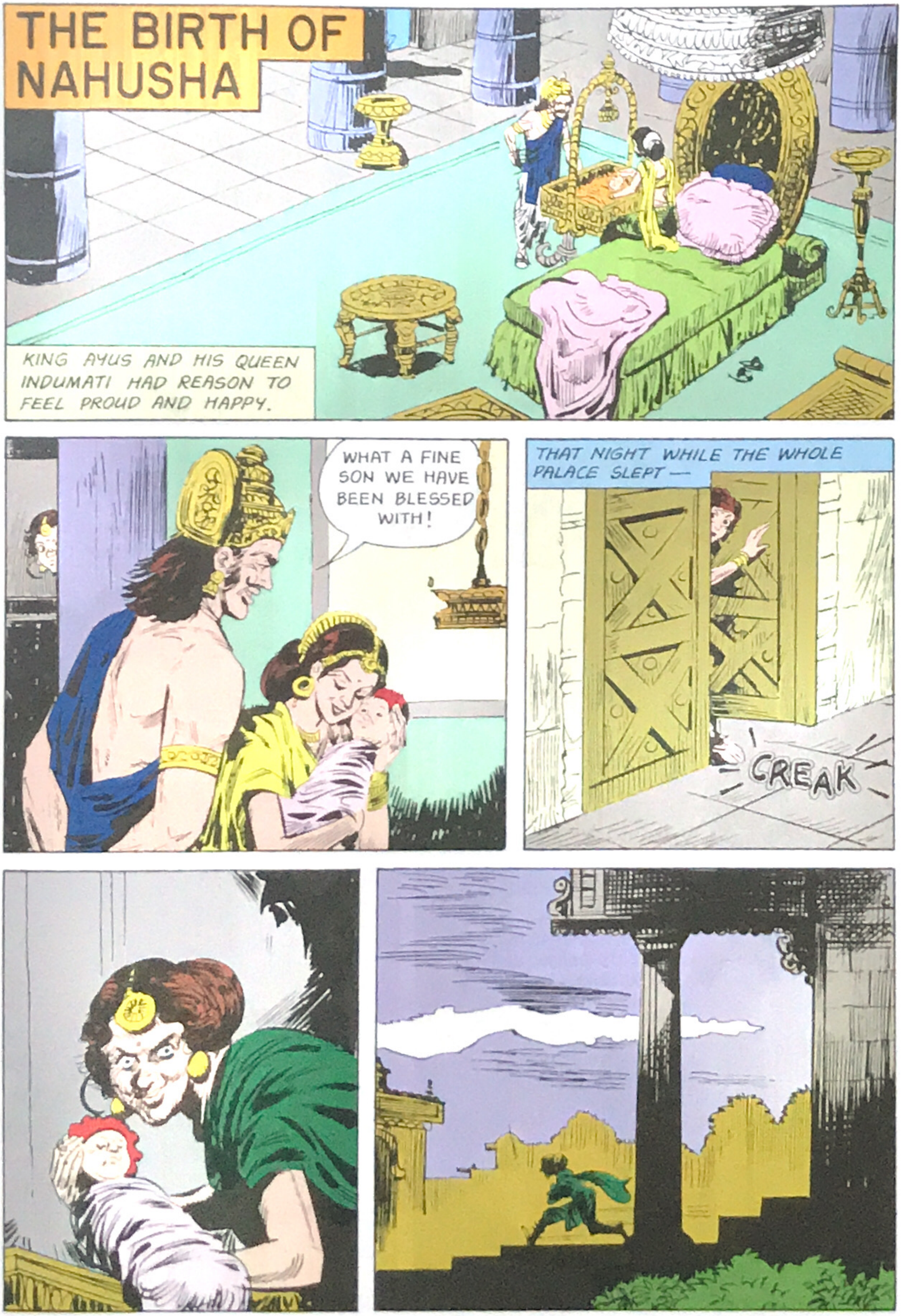
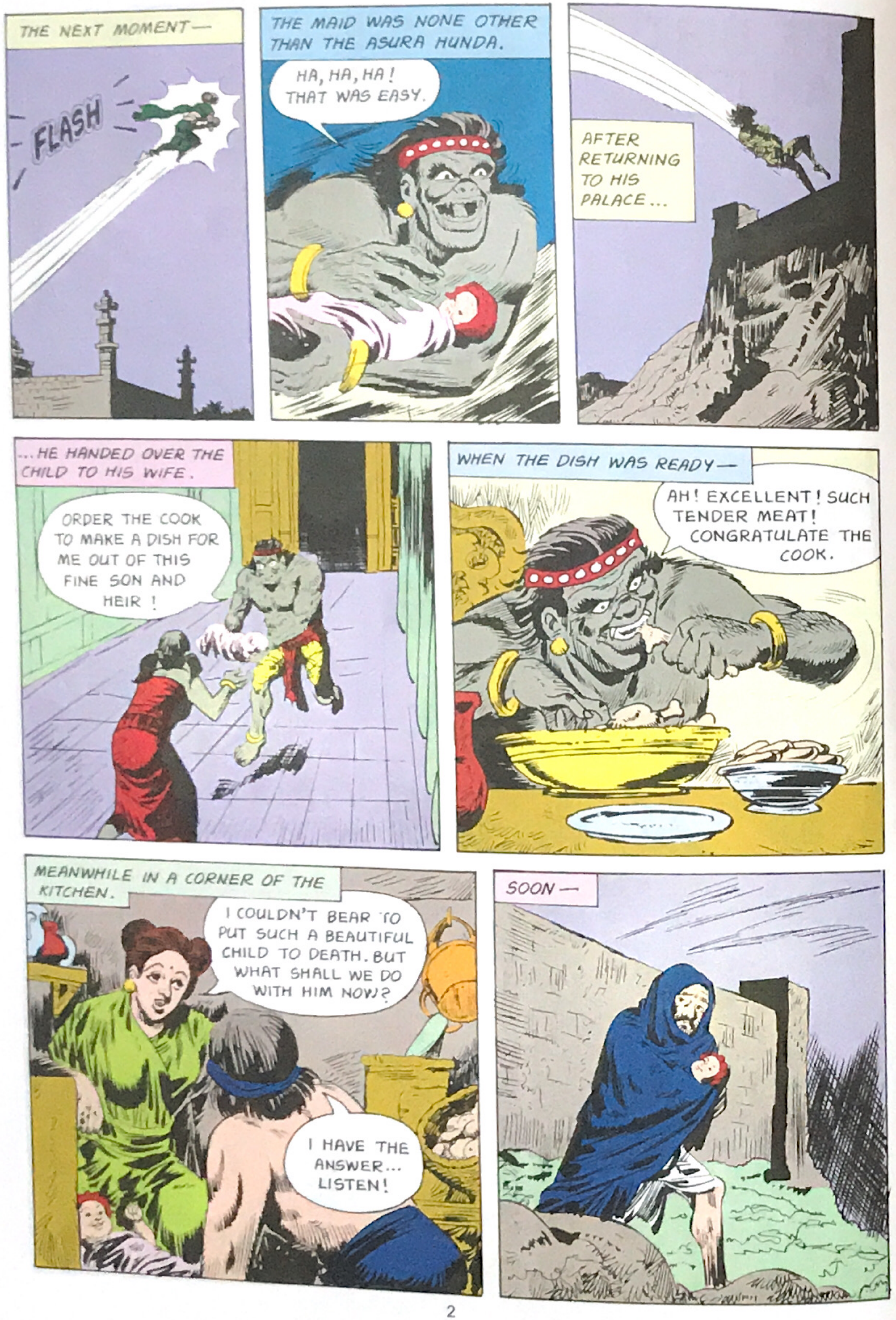
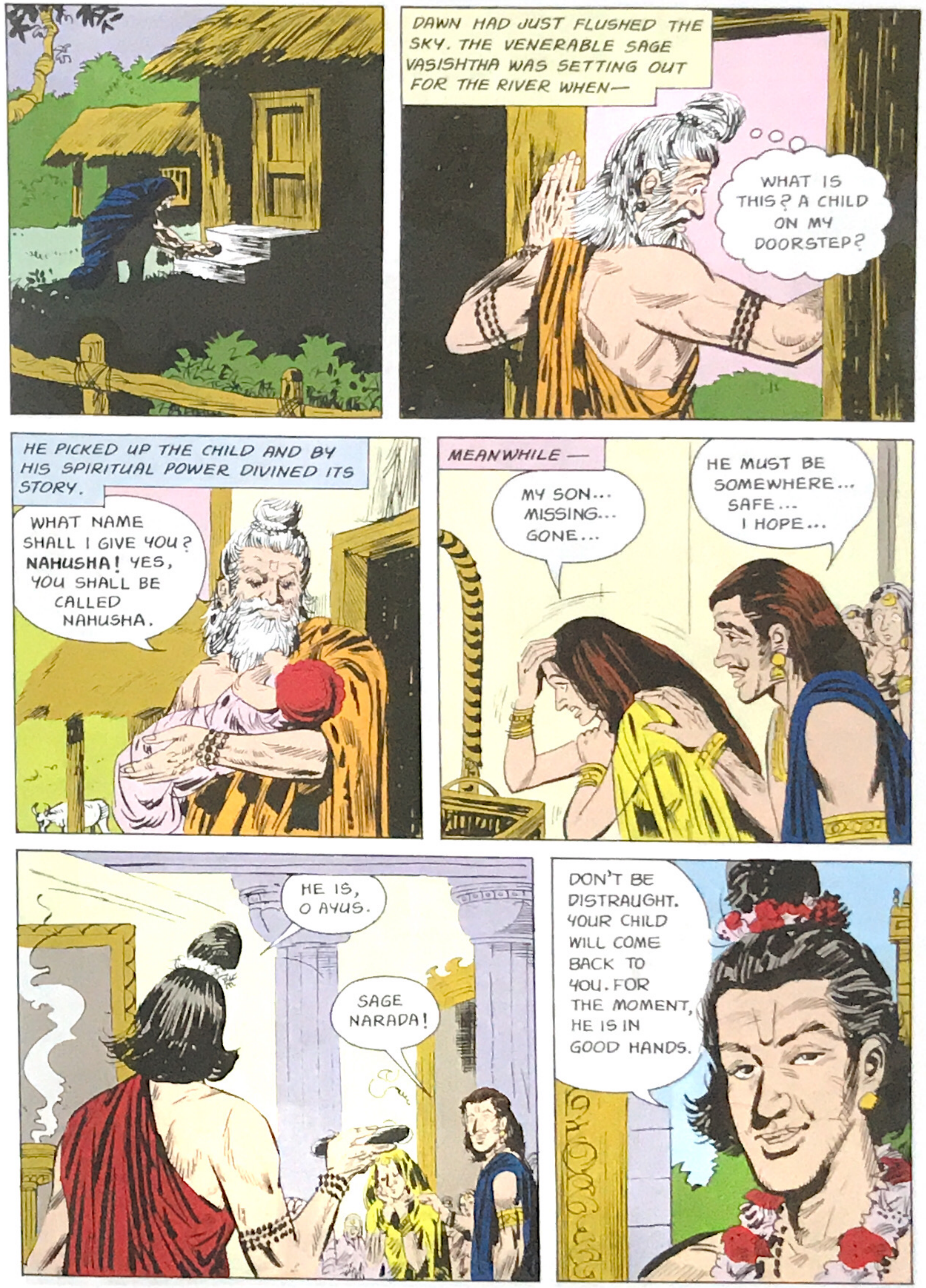
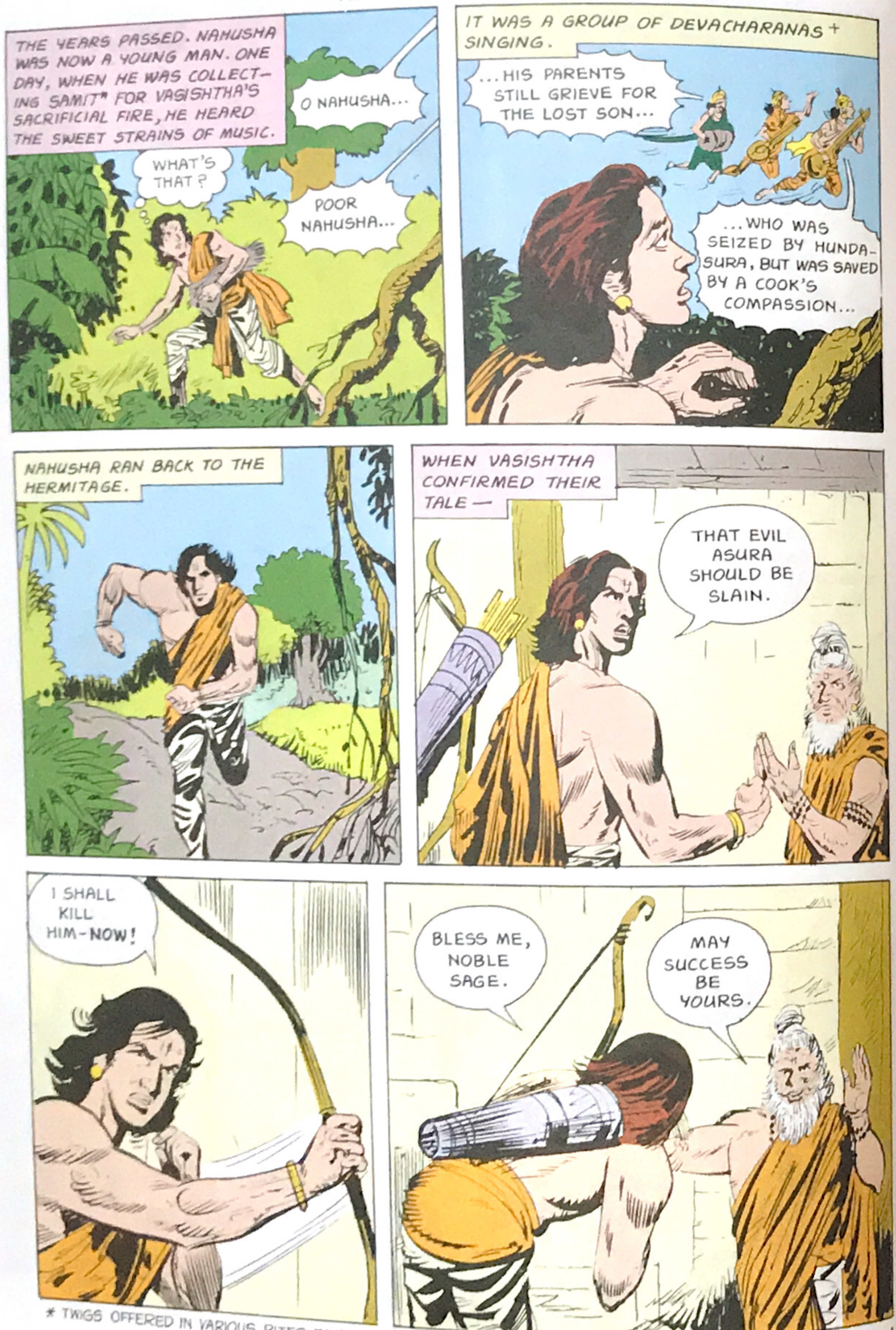


THE BIRTH OF NAHUSHA


KING AYUS AND HIS QUEEN INDUMATI HAD REASON TO FEEL PROUD AND HAPPY.
WHAT A FINE SON WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH!
THAT NIGHT WHILE THE WHOLE PALACE SLEPT —
CREAK

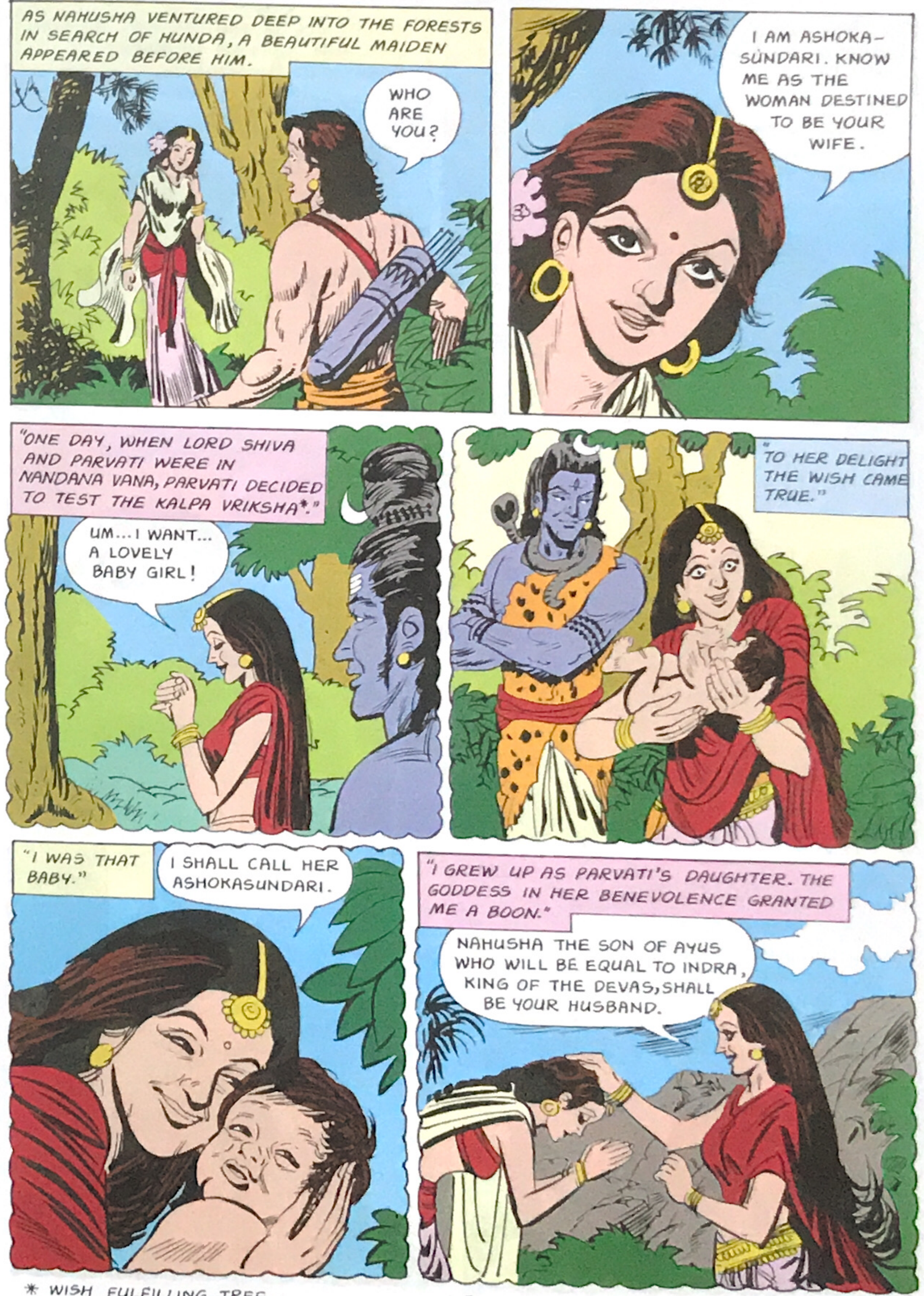

THE NEXT MOMENT—
FLASH
THE MAID WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE ASURA HUNDA.
HA, HA, HA! THAT WAS EASY.
AFTER RETURNING TO HIS PALACE...
...HE HANDED OVER THE CHILD TO HIS WIFE.
ORDER THE COOK TO MAKE A DISH FOR ME OUT OF THIS FINE SON AND HEIR!
WHEN THE DISH WAS READY—
AH! EXCELLENT! SUCH TENDER MEAT! CONGRATULATE THE COOK.
MEANWHILE IN A CORNER OF THE KITCHEN.
I COULDN'T BEAR TO PUT SUCH A BEAUTIFUL CHILD TO DEATH. BUT WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM NOW?
I HAVE THE ANSWER... LISTEN!
SOON—


DAWN HAD JUST FLUSHED THE SKY. THE VENERABLE SAGE VASISHTHA WAS SETTING OUT FOR THE RIVER WHEN—
WHAT IS THIS? A CHILD ON MY DOORSTEP?
HE PICKED UP THE CHILD AND BY HIS SPIRITUAL POWER DIVINED ITS STORY.
WHAT NAME SHALL I GIVE YOU? NAHUSHA! YES, YOU SHALL BE CALLED NAHUSHA.
MEANWHILE —
MY SON... MISSING... GONE...
HE MUST BE SOMEWHERE... SAFE... I HOPE...
HE IS, O AYUS.
SAGE NARADA!
DON'T BE DISTRAUGHT. YOUR CHILD WILL COME BACK TO YOU. FOR THE MOMENT, HE IS IN GOOD HANDS.

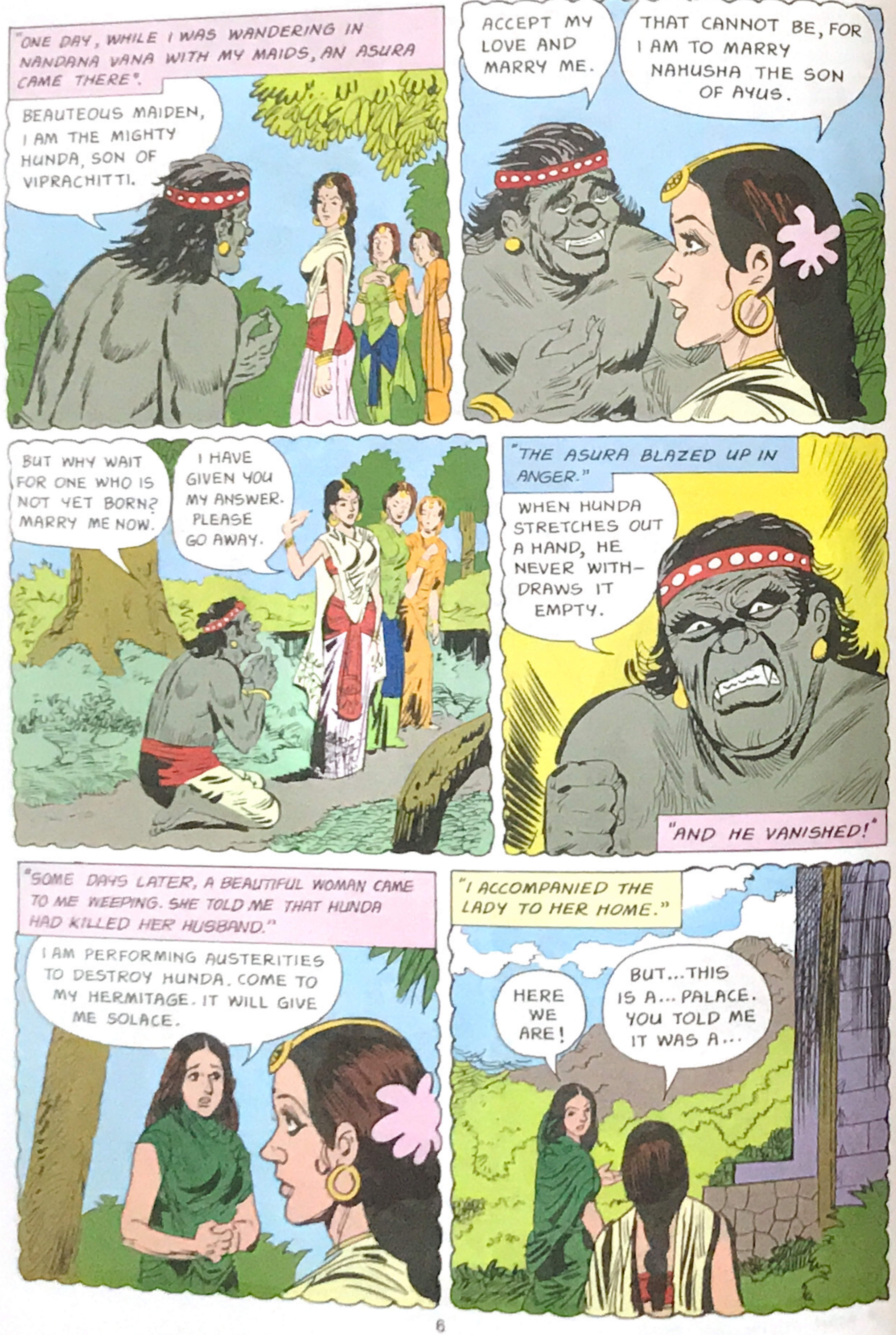

THE YEARS PASSED. NAHUSHA WAS NOW A YOUNG MAN. ONE DAY, WHEN HE WAS COLLECTING SAMIT* FOR VASISHTHA'S SACRIFICIAL FIRE, HE HEARD THE SWEET STRAINS OF MUSIC.
O NAHUSHA...
WHAT'S THAT?
POOR NAHUSHA...
IT WAS A GROUP OF DEVACHARANAS+ SINGING.
...HIS PARENTS STILL GRIEVE FOR THE LOST SON...
...WHO WAS SEIZED BY HUNDASURA, BUT WAS SAVED BY A COOK'S COMPASSION...
NAHUSHA RAN BACK TO THE HERMITAGE.
WHEN VASISHTHA CONFIRMED THEIR TALE —
THAT EVIL ASURA SHOULD BE SLAIN.
I SHALL KILL HIM-NOW!
BLESS ME, NOBLE SAGE.
MAY SUCCESS BE YOURS.

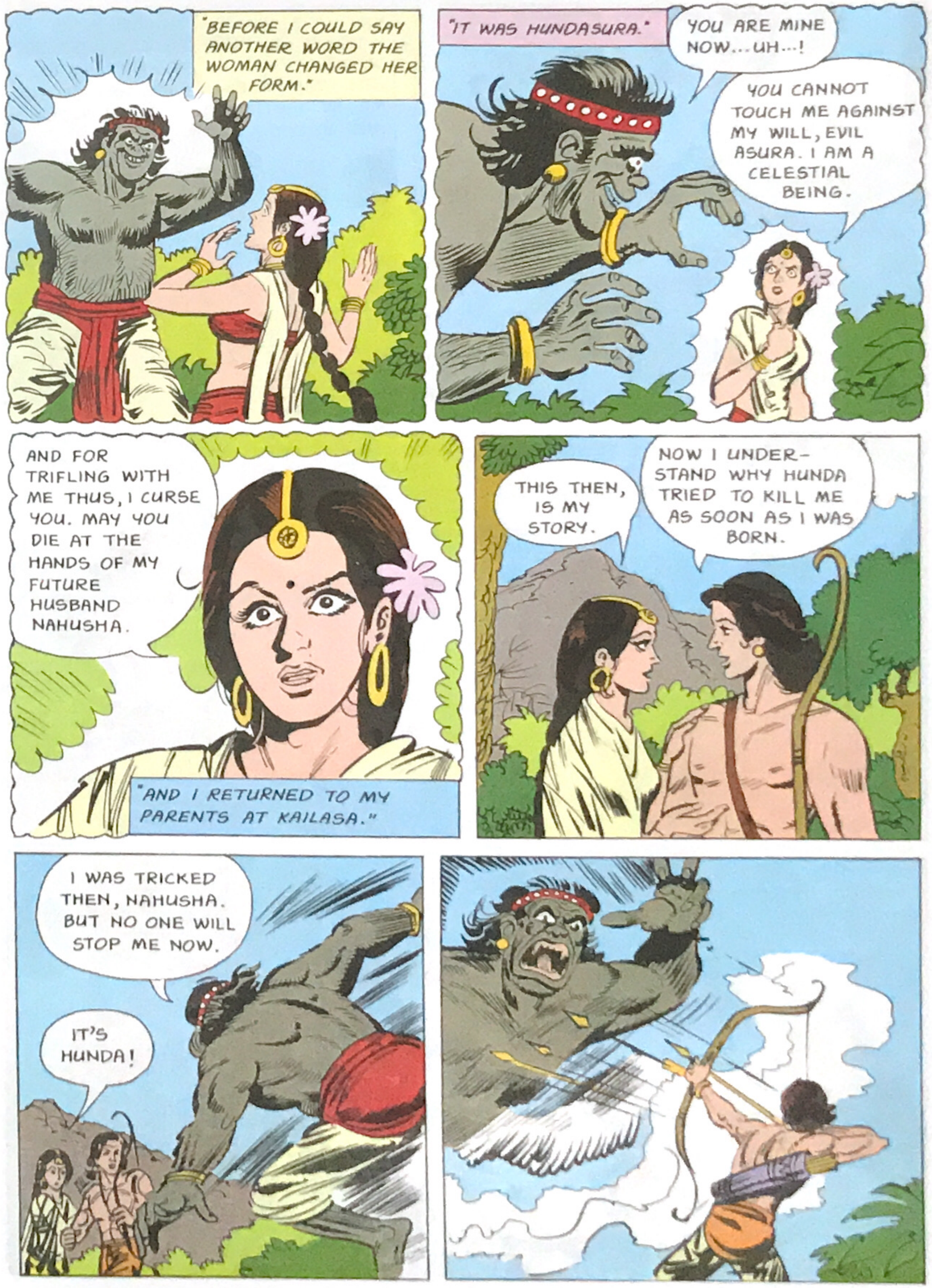
* TWIGS OFFERED IN VARIOUS RITES TO AGNI

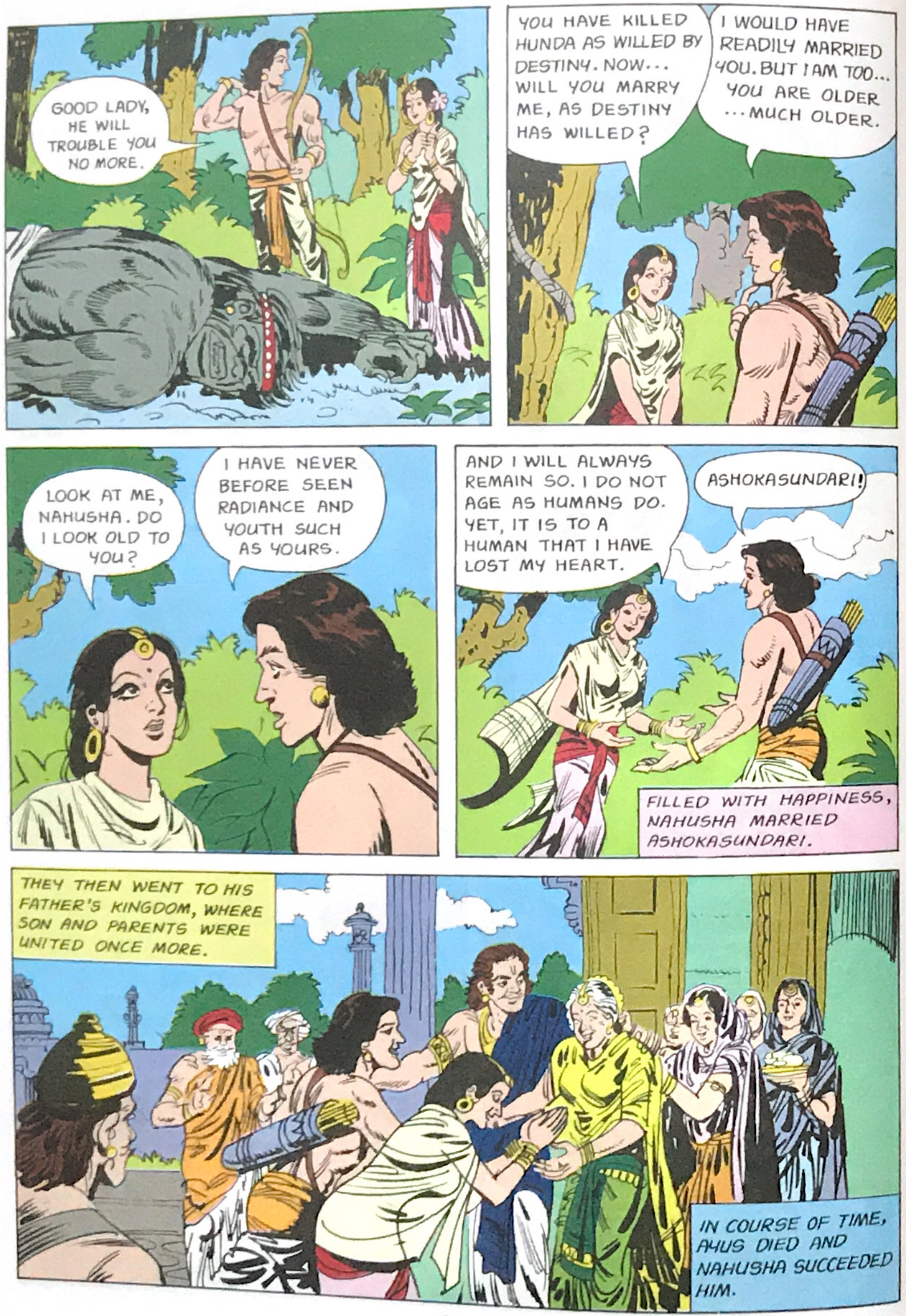
+ CELESTIAL MUSICIANS


AS NAHUSHA VENTURED DEEP INTO THE FORESTS IN SEARCH OF HUNDA, A BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM ASHOKASUNDARI. KNOW ME AS THE WOMAN DESTINED TO BE YOUR WIFE.
"ONE DAY, WHEN LORD SHIVA AND PARVATI WERE IN NANDANA VANA, PARVATI DECIDED TO TEST THE KALPA VRIKSHA*."
UM... I WANT... A LOVELY BABY GIRL!
"TO HER DELIGHT THE WISH CAME TRUE."
"I WAS THAT BABY."
I SHALL CALL HER ASHOKASUNDARI.
"I GREW UP AS PARVATI'S DAUGHTER. THE GODDESS IN HER BENEVOLENCE GRANTED ME A BOON."
NAHUSHA THE SON OF AYUS WHO WILL BE EQUAL TO INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, SHALL BE YOUR HUSBAND.

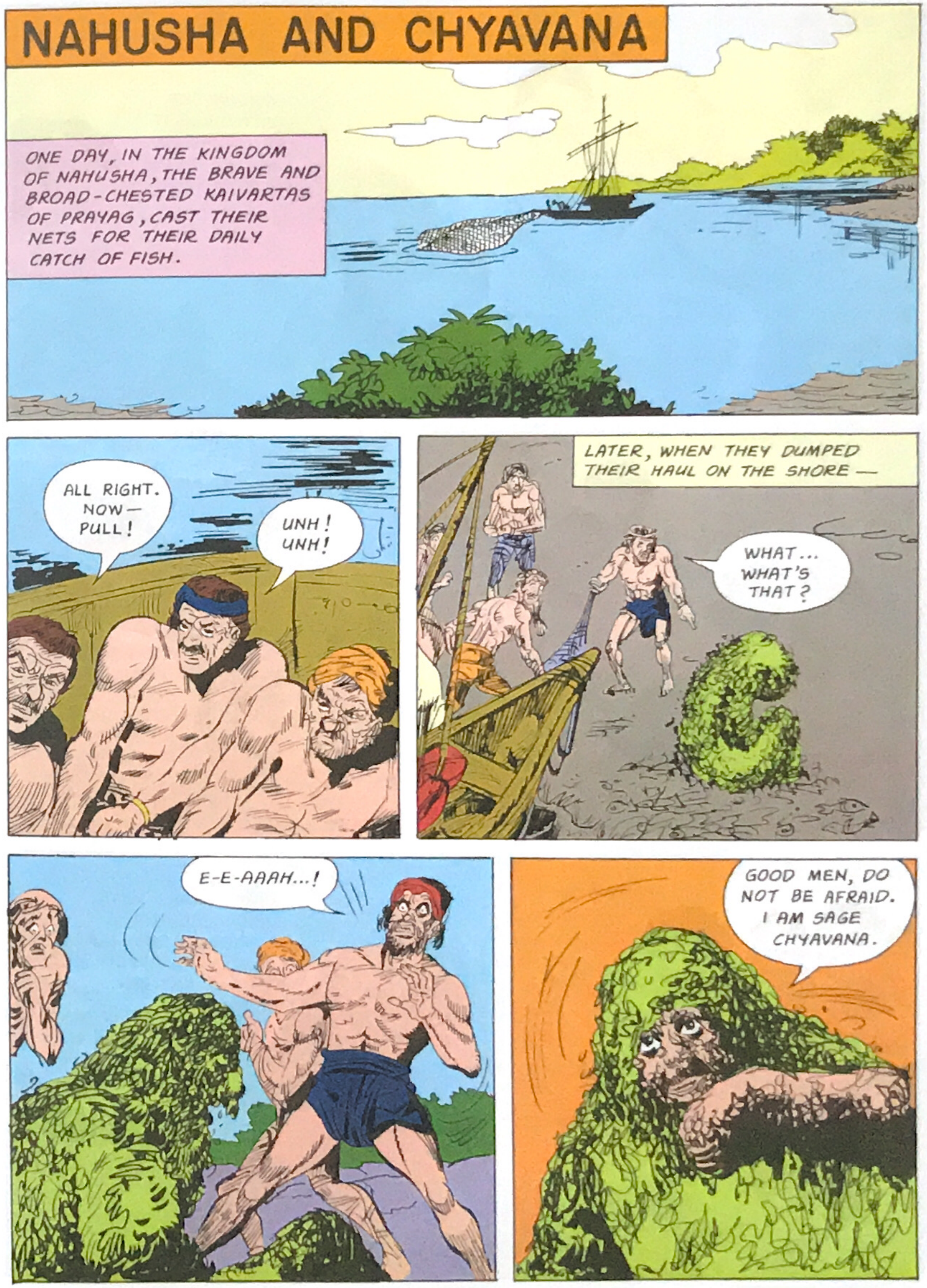
* WISH FULFILLING TREE

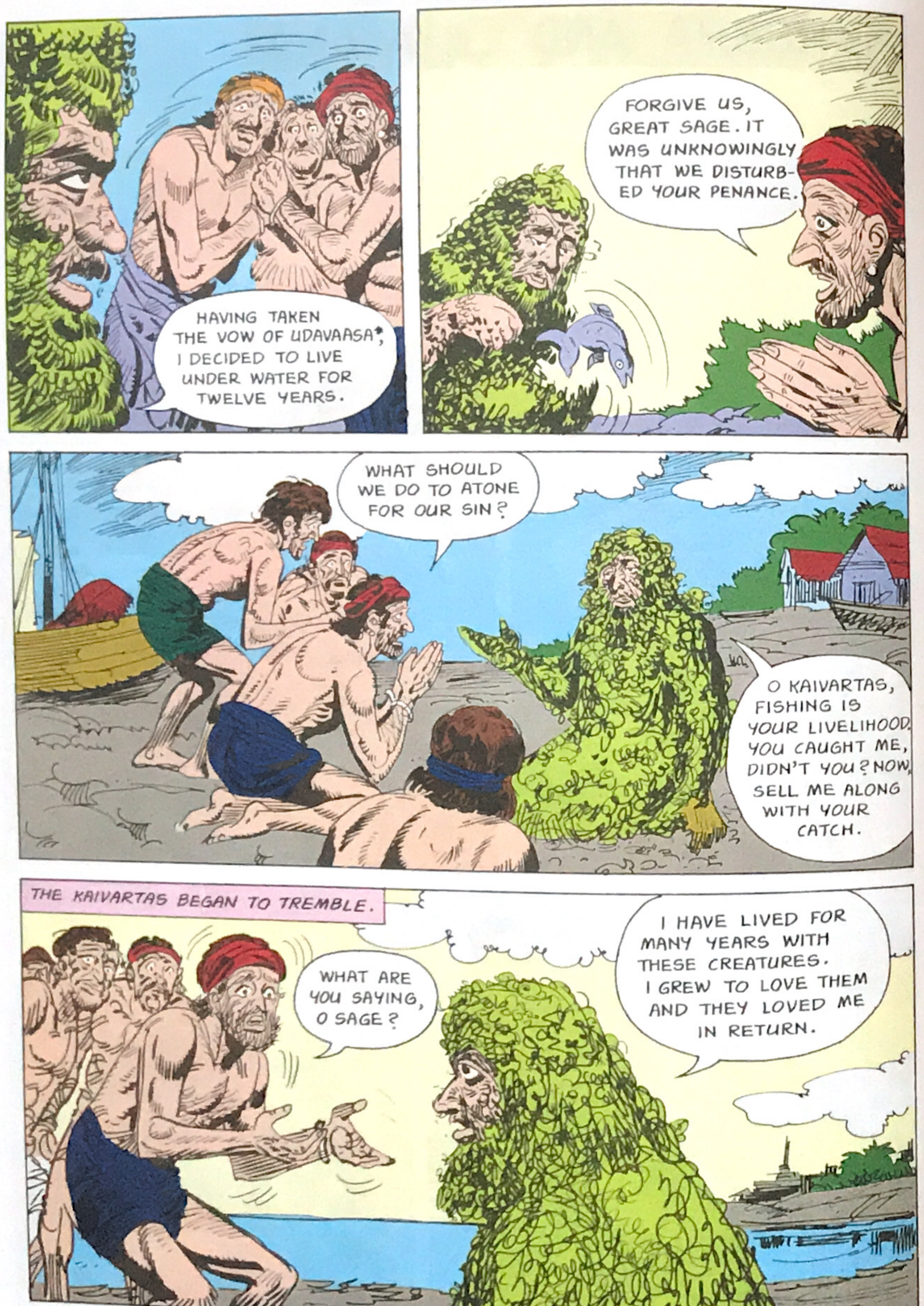

"ONE DAY, WHILE I WAS WANDERING IN NANDANA VANA WITH MY MAIDS, AN ASURA CAME THERE".
BEAUTEOUS MAIDEN, I AM THE MIGHTY HUNDA, SON OF VIPRACHITTI.
ACCEPT MY LOVE AND MARRY ME.
THAT CANNOT BE, FOR I AM TO MARRY NAHUSHA THE SON OF AYUS.
BUT WHY WAIT FOR ONE WHO IS NOT YET BORN? MARRY ME NOW.
I HAVE GIVEN YOU MY ANSWER. PLEASE GO AWAY.
"THE ASURA BLAZED UP IN ANGER."
WHEN HUNDA STRETCHES OUT A HAND, HE NEVER WITHDRAWS IT EMPTY.
"AND HE VANISHED!"
"SOME DAYS LATER, A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN CAME TO ME WEEPING. SHE TOLD ME THAT HUNDA HAD KILLED HER HUSBAND."
I AM PERFORMING AUSTERITIES TO DESTROY HUNDA. COME TO MY HERMITAGE. IT WILL GIVE ME SOLACE.
"I ACCOMPANIED THE LADY TO HER HOME."
HERE WE ARE!
BUT... THIS IS A... PALACE. YOU TOLD ME IT WAS A...


"BEFORE I COULD SAY ANOTHER WORD THE WOMAN CHANGED HER FORM."
"IT WAS HUNDASURA."
YOU ARE MINE NOW... UH...!
YOU CANNOT TOUCH ME AGAINST MY WILL, EVIL ASURA. I AM A CELESTIAL BEING.
AND FOR TRIFLING WITH ME THUS, I CURSE YOU. MAY YOU DIE AT THE HANDS OF MY FUTURE HUSBAND NAHUSHA.
"AND I RETURNED TO MY PARENTS AT KAILASA."
THIS THEN, IS MY STORY.
NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY HUNDA TRIED TO KILL ME AS SOON AS I WAS BORN.
I WAS TRICKED THEN, NAHUSHA. BUT NO ONE WILL STOP ME NOW.
IT'S HUNDA!


GOOD LADY, HE WILL TROUBLE YOU NO MORE.
YOU HAVE KILLED HUNDA AS WILLED BY DESTINY. NOW... WILL YOU MARRY ME, AS DESTINY HAS WILLED?
I WOULD HAVE READILY MARRIED YOU. BUT I AM TOO... YOU ARE OLDER ...MUCH OLDER.
LOOK AT ME, NAHUSHA. DO I LOOK OLD TO YOU?
I HAVE NEVER BEFORE SEEN RADIANCE AND YOUTH SUCH AS YOURS.
AND I WILL ALWAYS REMAIN SO. I DO NOT AGE AS HUMANS DO. YET, IT IS TO A HUMAN THAT I HAVE LOST MY HEART.
ASHOKASUNDARI!
FILLED WITH HAPPINESS, NAHUSHA MARRIED ASHOKASUNDARI.
THEY THEN WENT TO HIS FATHER'S KINGDOM, WHERE SON AND PARENTS WERE UNITED ONCE MORE.
IN COURSE OF TIME, AYUS DIED AND NAHUSHA SUCCEEDED HIM.

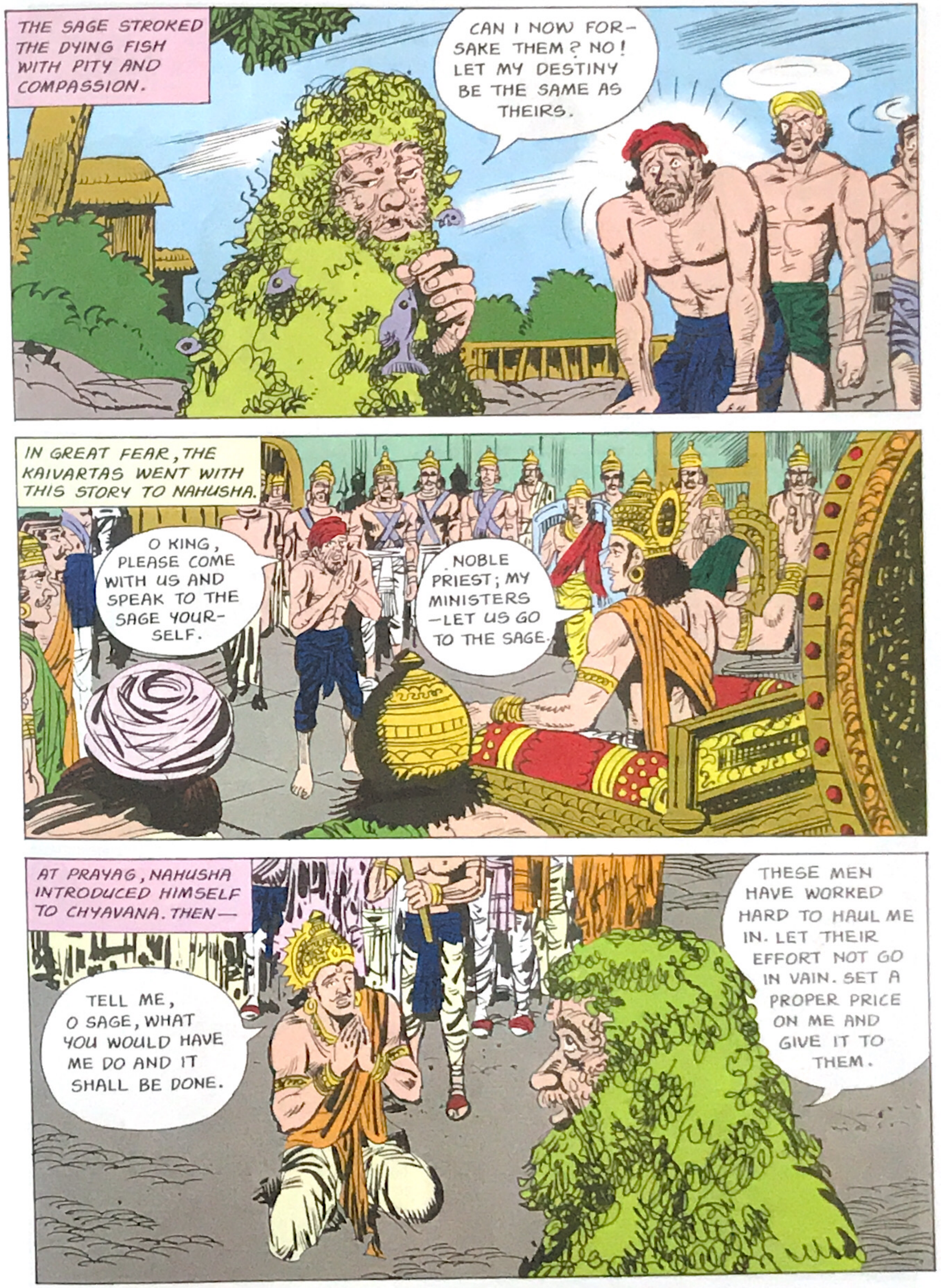
NAHUSHA AND CHYAVANA

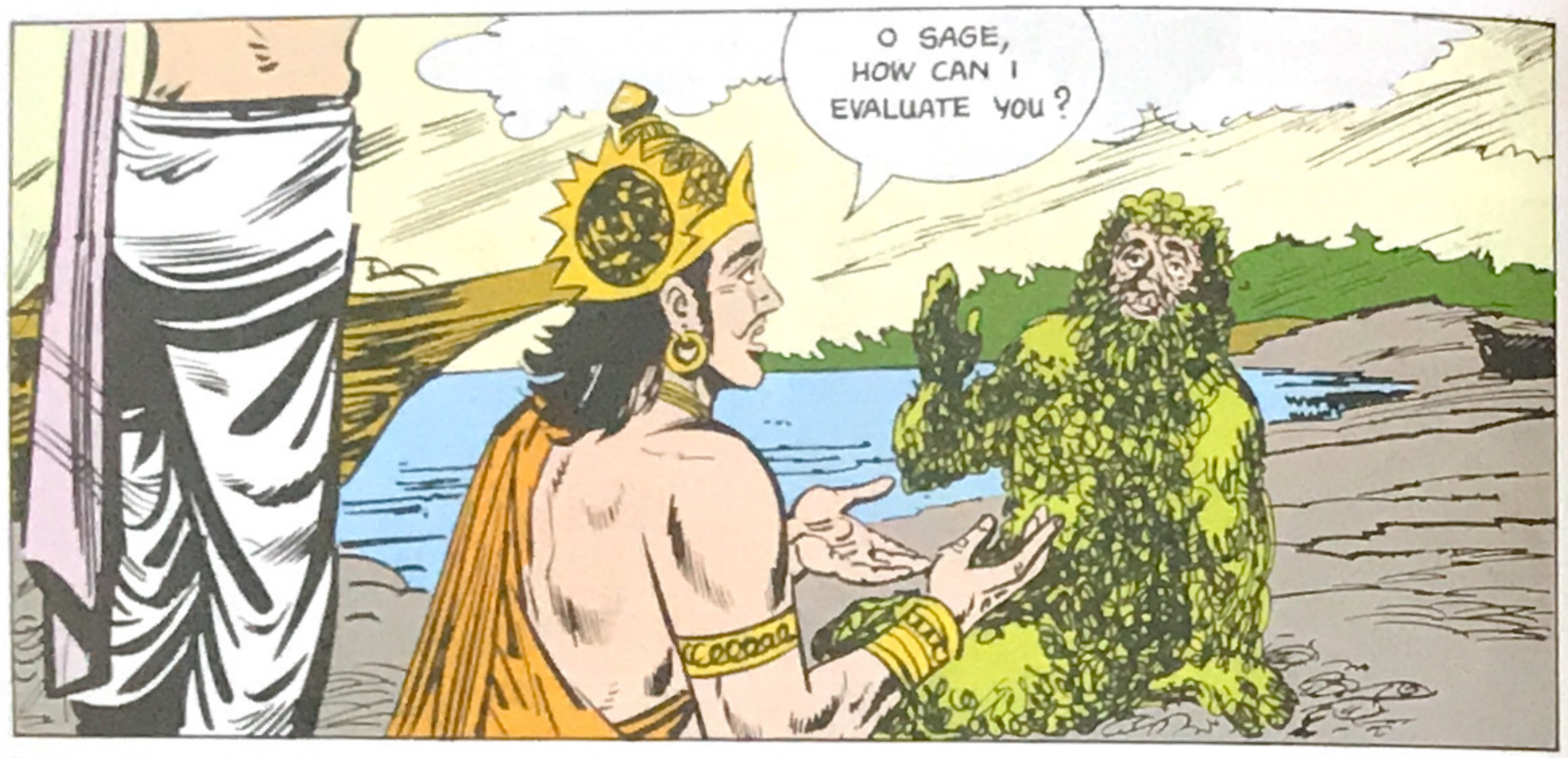

ONE DAY, IN THE KINGDOM OF NAHUSHA, THE BRAVE AND BROAD-CHESTED KAIVARTAS OF PRAYAG, CAST THEIR NETS FOR THEIR DAILY CATCH OF FISH.
ALL RIGHT. NOW— PULL!
UNH! UNH!
LATER, WHEN THEY DUMPED THEIR HAUL ON THE SHORE —
WHAT... WHAT'S THAT?
E-E-AAAH...!
GOOD MEN, DO NOT BE AFRAID. I AM SAGE CHYAVANA.

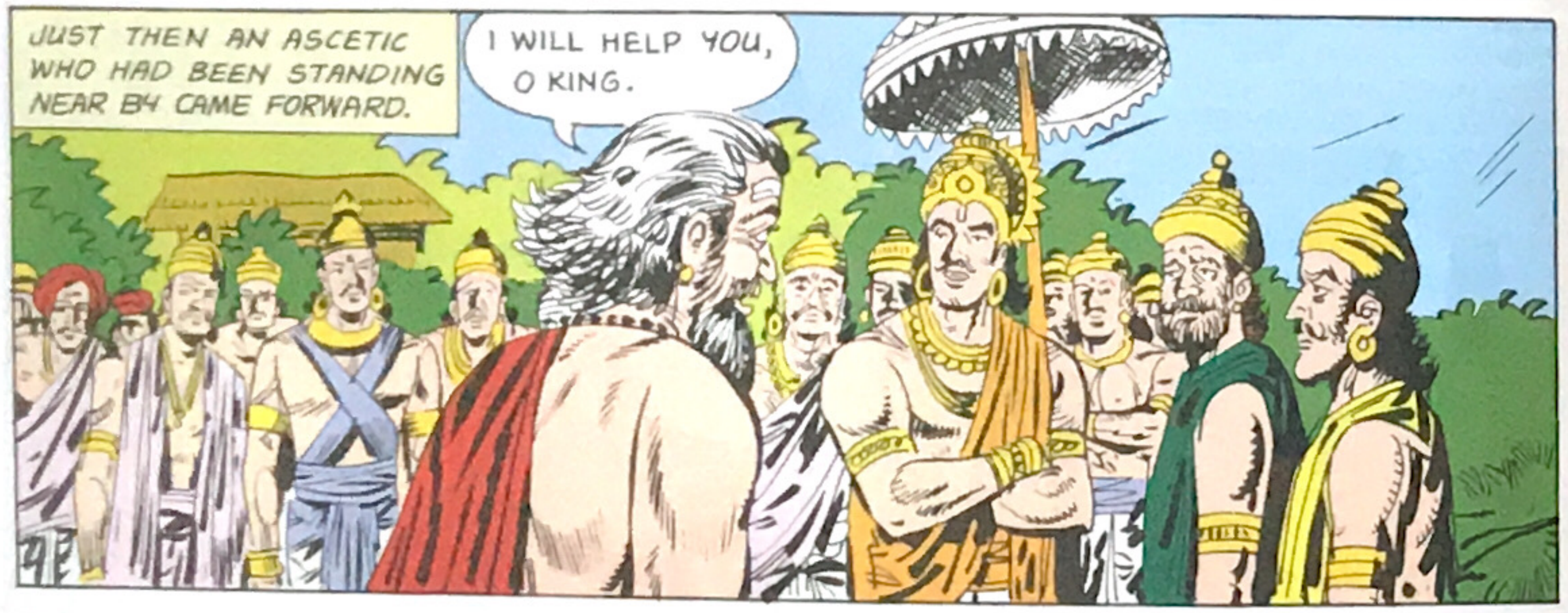

HAVING TAKEN THE VOW OF UDAVAASA*, I DECIDED TO LIVE UNDER WATER FOR TWELVE YEARS.
FORGIVE US, GREAT SAGE. IT WAS UNKNOWINGLY THAT WE DISTURBED YOUR PENANCE.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO ATONE FOR OUR SIN?
O KAIVARTAS, FISHING IS YOUR LIVELIHOOD. YOU CAUGHT ME, DIDN'T YOU? NOW, SELL ME ALONG WITH YOUR CATCH.
THE KAIVARTAS BEGAN TO TREMBLE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, O SAGE?
I HAVE LIVED FOR MANY YEARS WITH THESE CREATURES. I GREW TO LOVE THEM AND THEY LOVED ME IN RETURN.

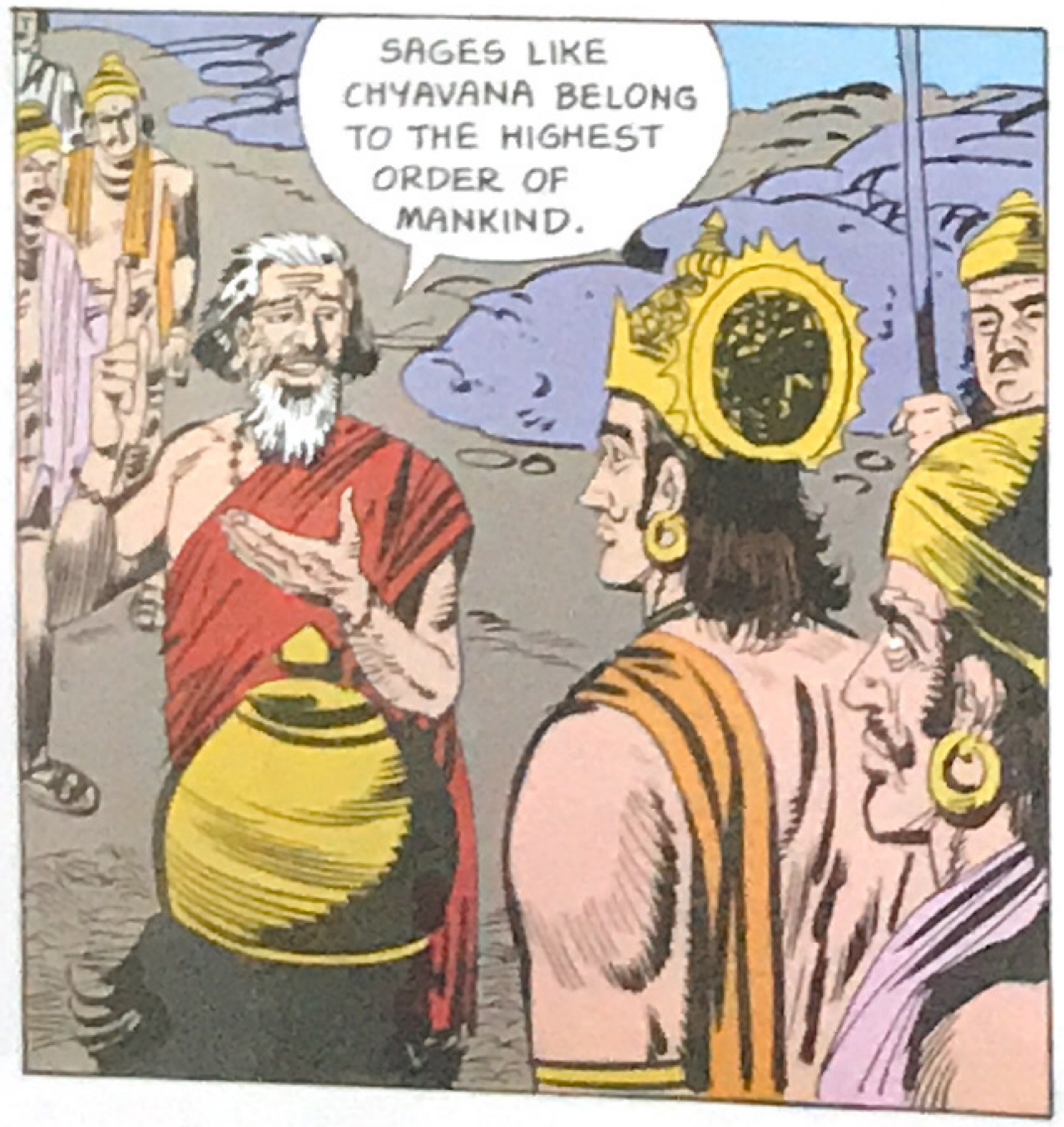
---

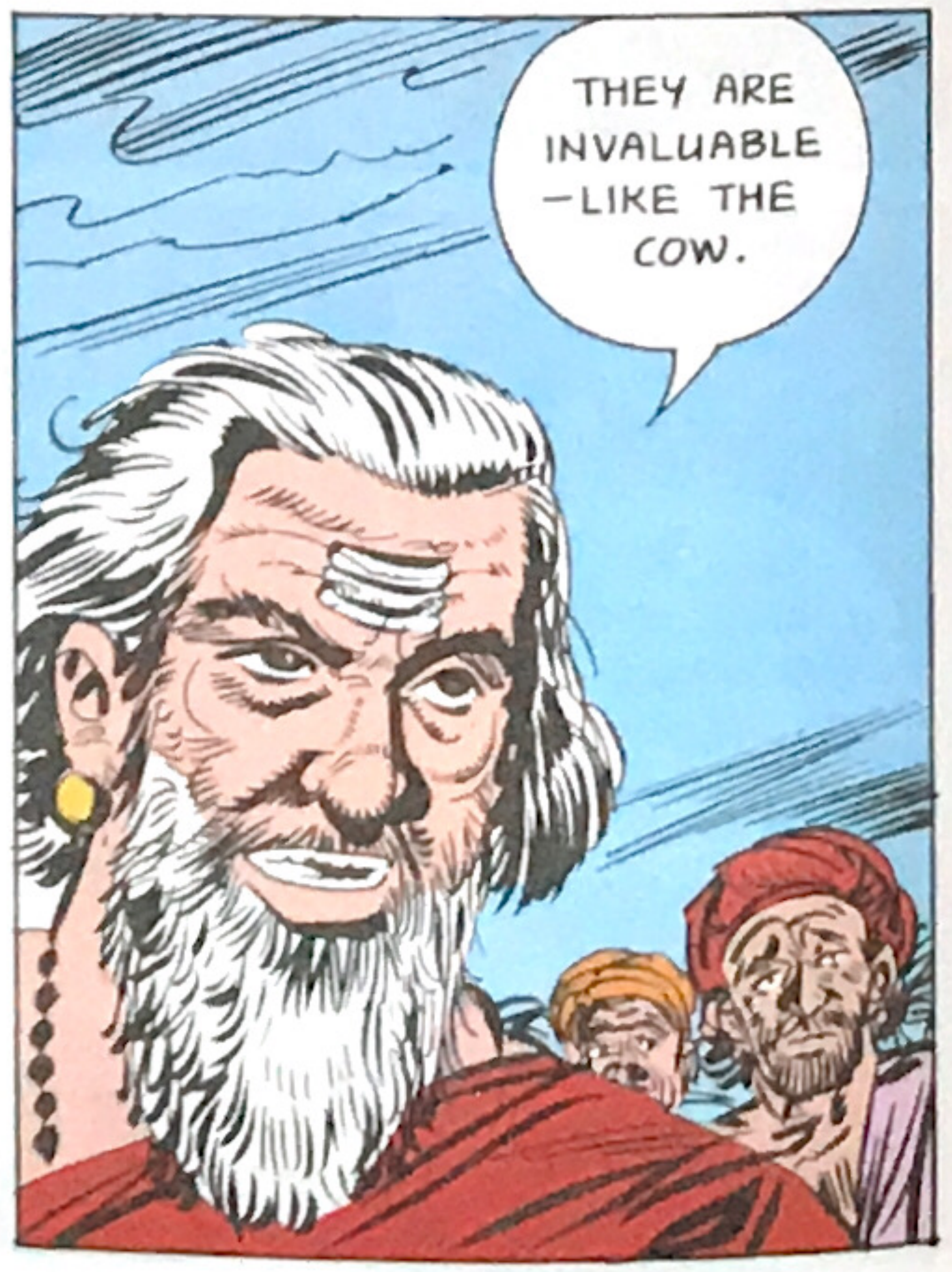
* LIVING IN WATER

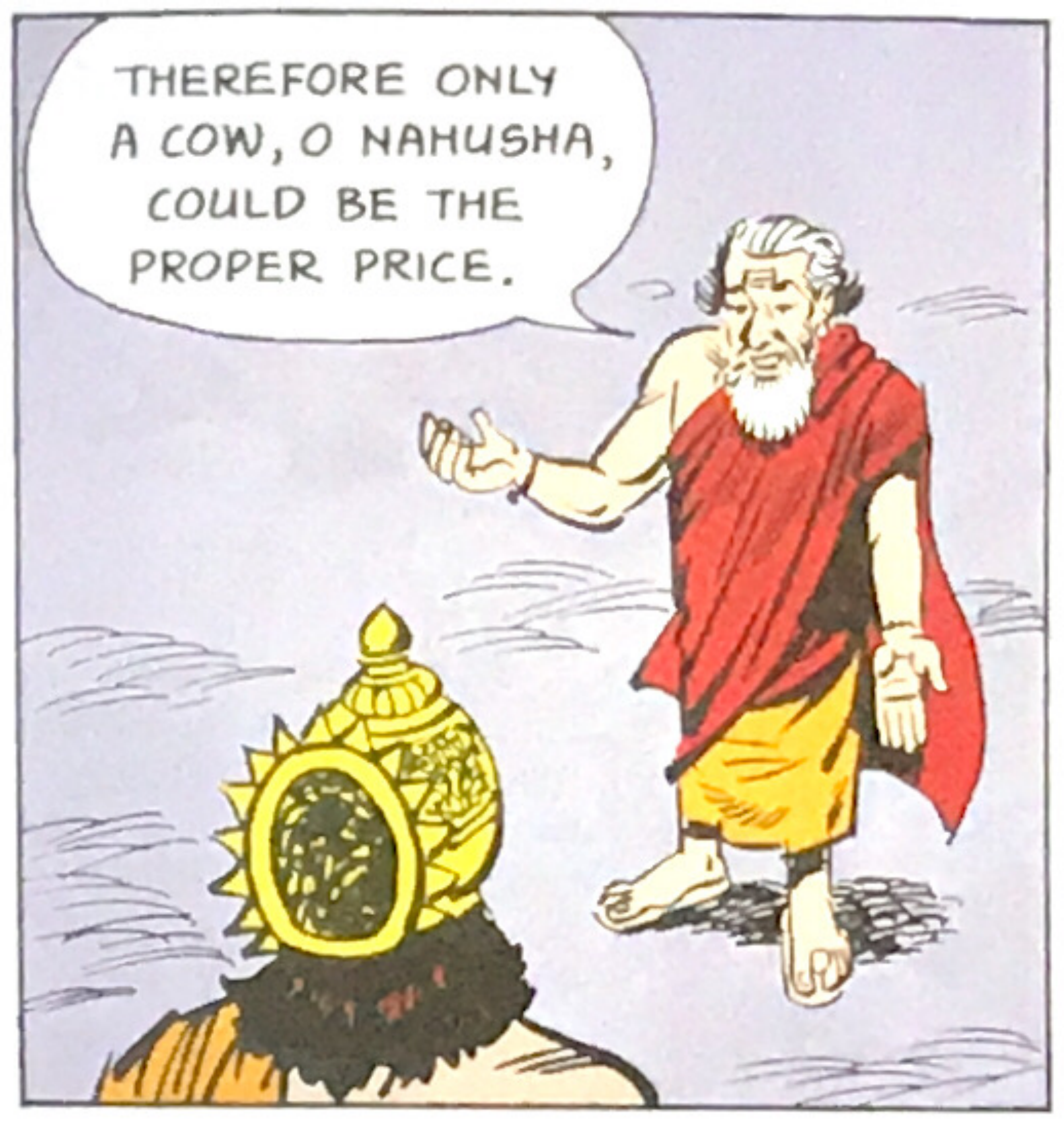

THE SAGE STROKED THE DYING FISH WITH PITY AND COMPASSION.
CAN I NOW FORSAKE THEM? NO! LET MY DESTINY BE THE SAME AS THEIRS.
IN GREAT FEAR, THE KAIVARTAS WENT WITH THIS STORY TO NAHUSHA.
O KING, PLEASE COME WITH US AND SPEAK TO THE SAGE YOURSELF.
NOBLE PRIEST; MY MINISTERS — LET US GO TO THE SAGE.
AT PRAYAG, NAHUSHA INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO CHYAVANA. THEN—
TELL ME, O SAGE, WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ME DO AND IT SHALL BE DONE.
THESE MEN HAVE WORKED HARD TO HAUL ME IN. LET THEIR EFFORT NOT GO IN VAIN. SET A PROPER PRICE ON ME AND GIVE IT TO THEM.

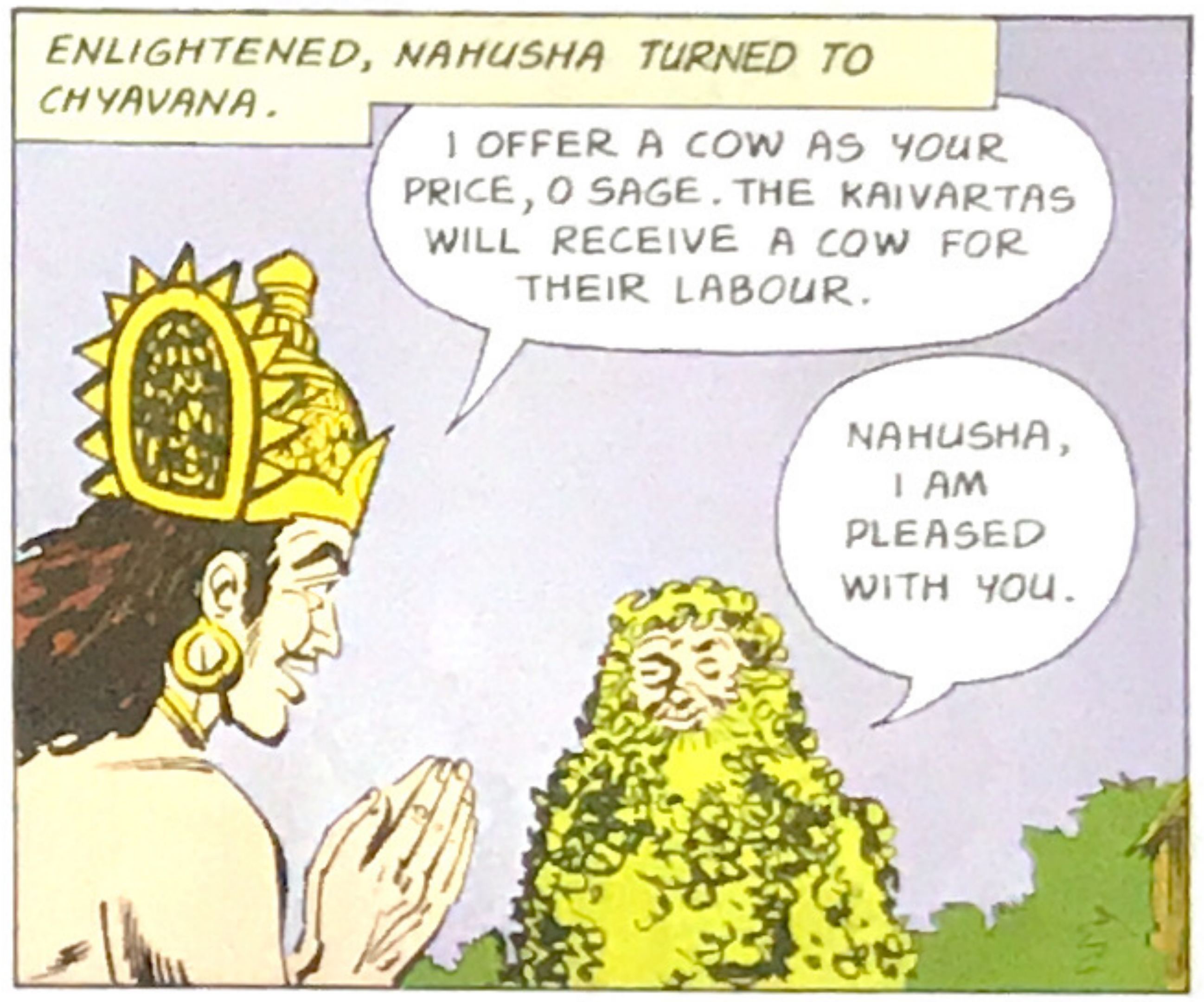

O SAGE, HOW CAN I EVALUATE YOU?

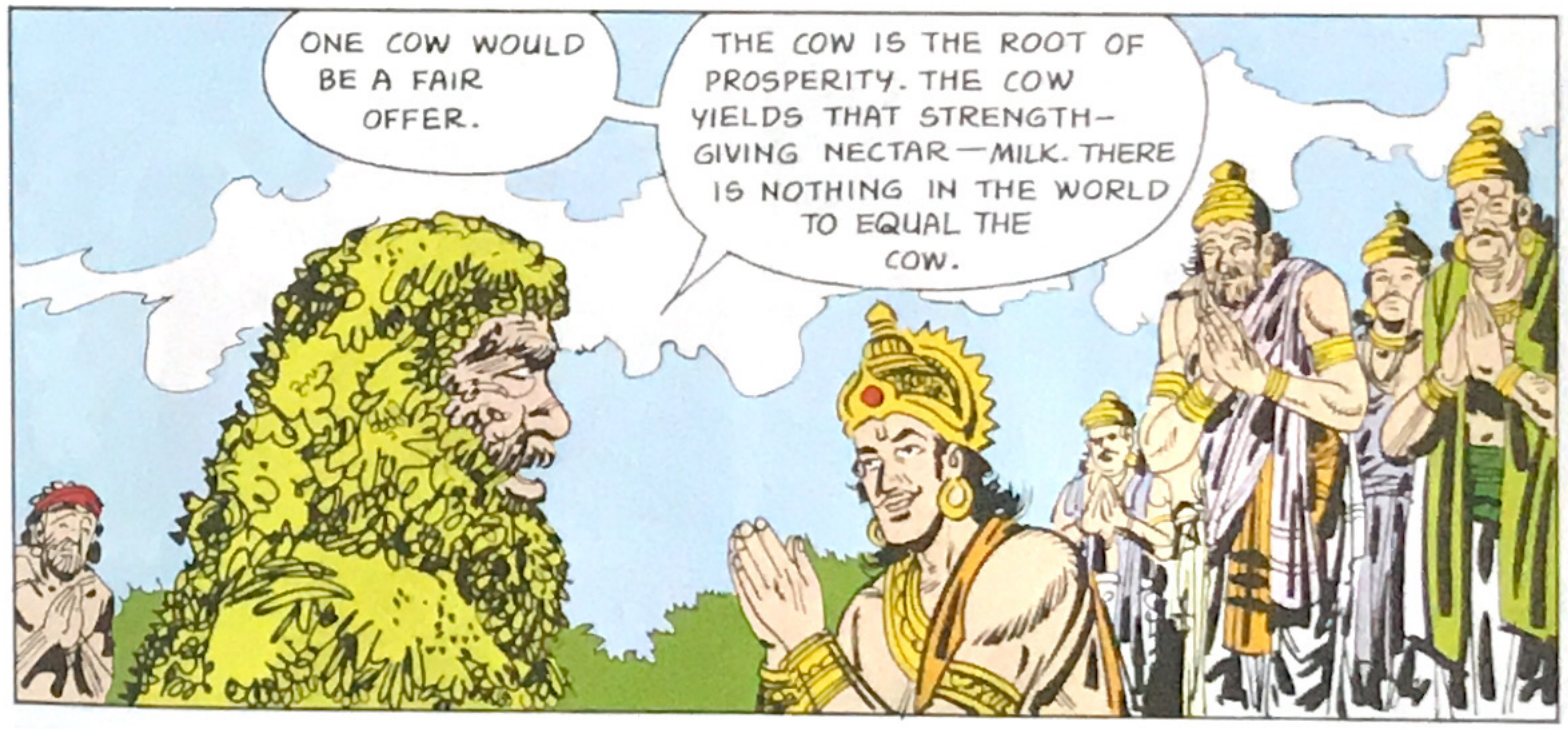

JUST THEN AN ASCETIC WHO HAD BEEN STANDING NEAR BY CAME FORWARD.
I WILL HELP YOU, O KING.

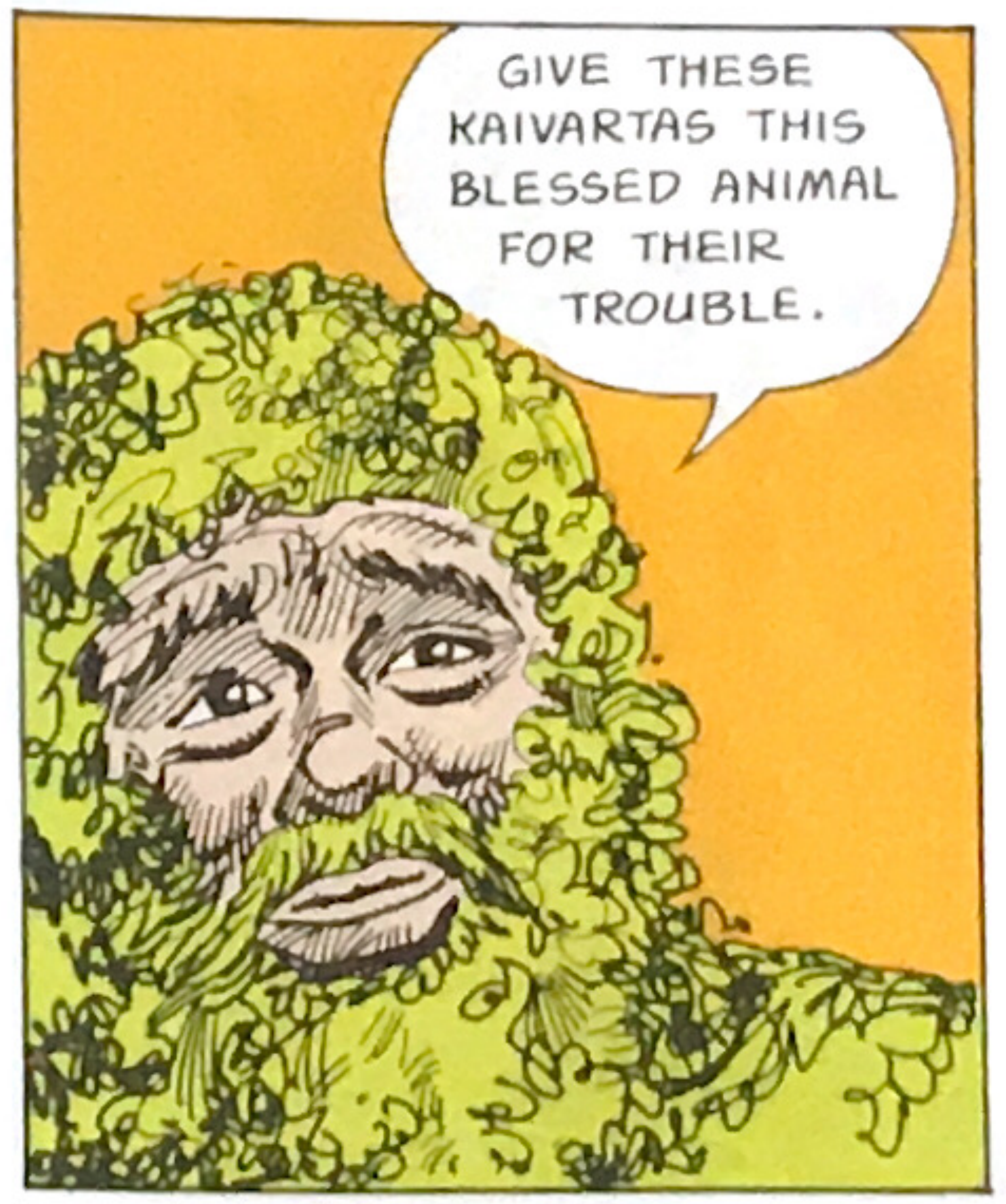

SAGES LIKE CHYAVANA BELONG TO THE HIGHEST ORDER OF MANKIND.

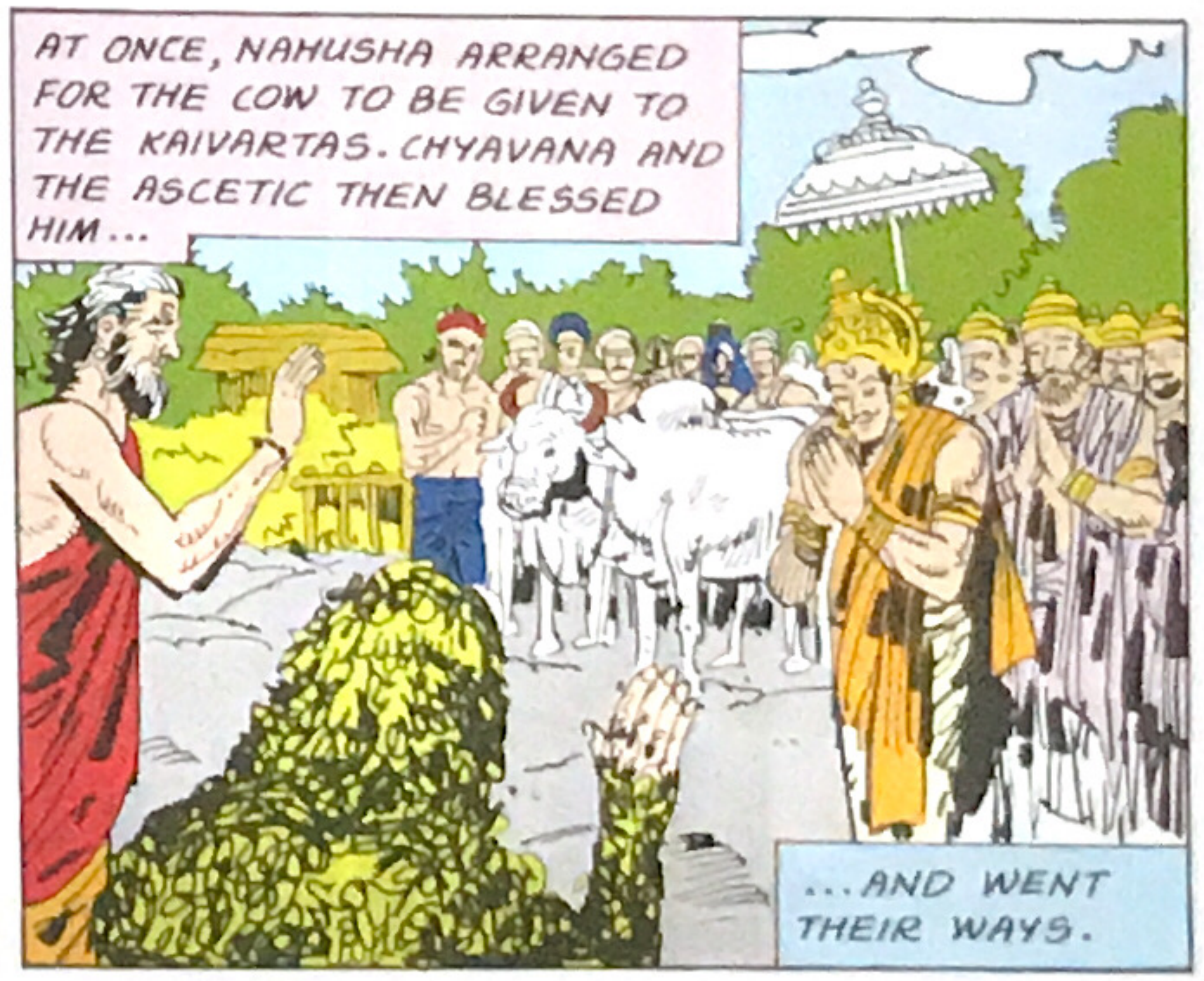

THEY ARE INVALUABLE —LIKE THE COW.

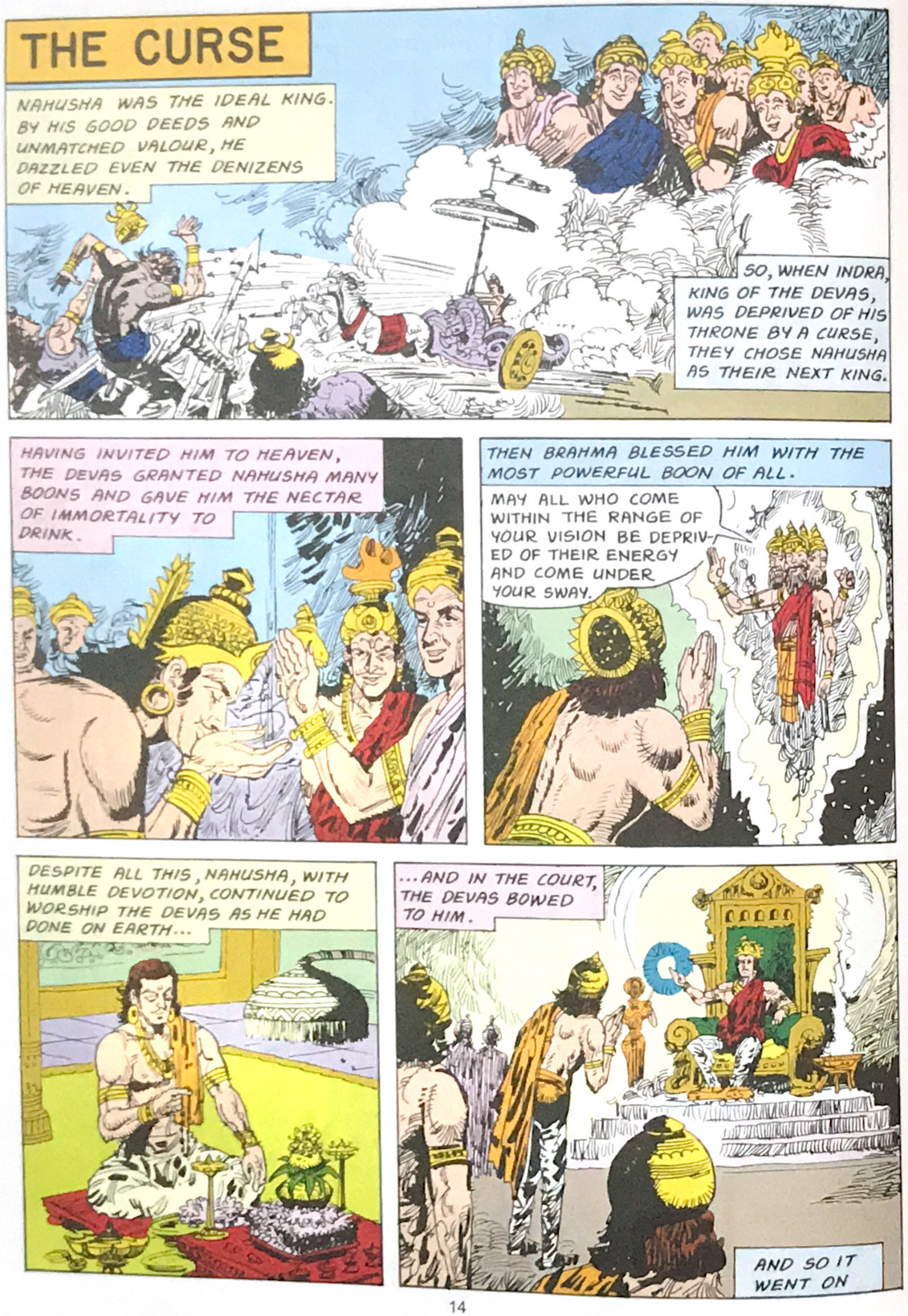

THEREFORE ONLY A COW, O NAHUSHA, COULD BE THE PROPER PRICE.

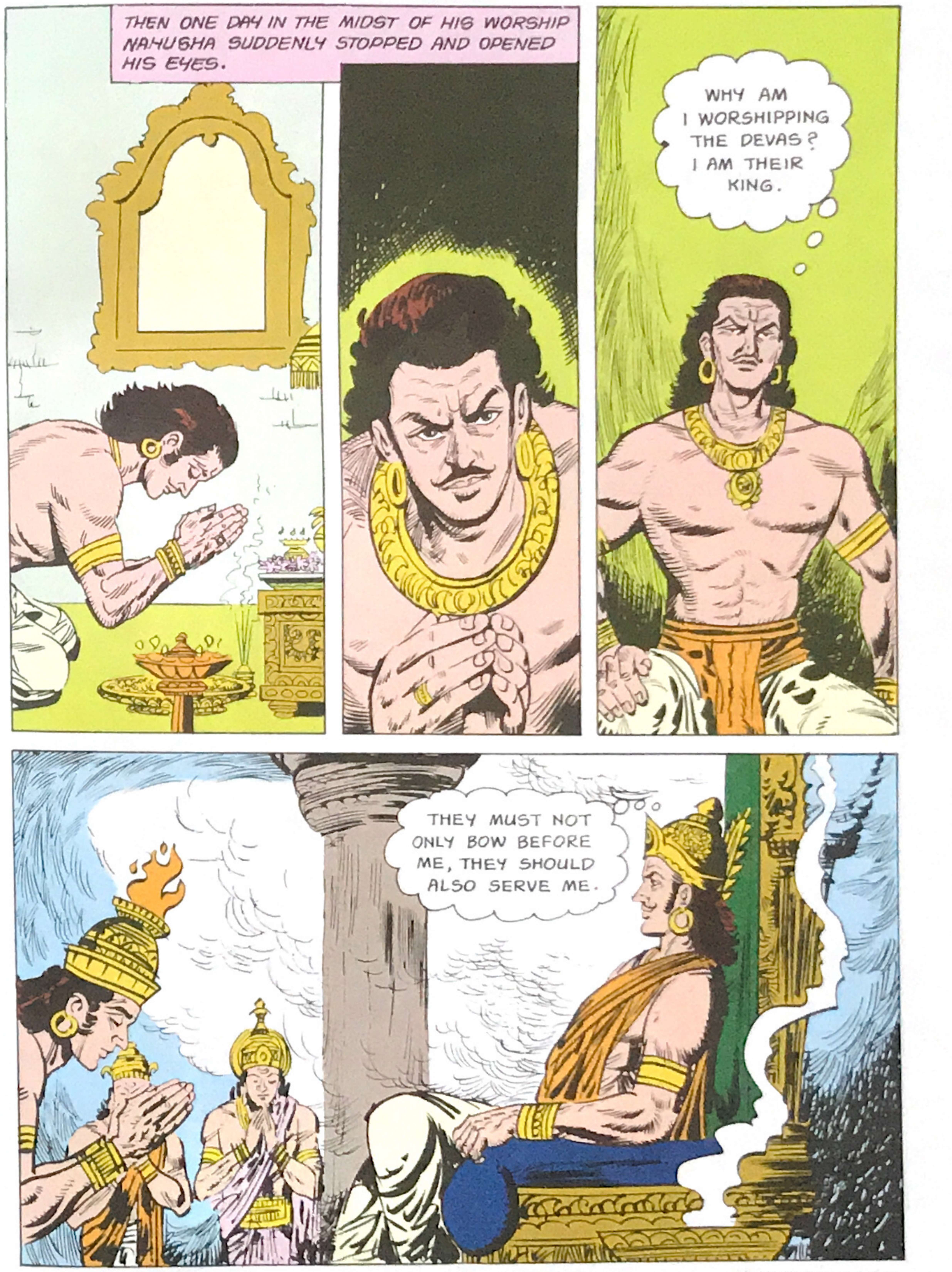

ENLIGHTENED, NAHUSHA TURNED TO CHYAVANA.
I OFFER A COW AS YOUR PRICE, O SAGE. THE KAIVARTAS WILL RECEIVE A COW FOR THEIR LABOUR.
NAHUSHA, I AM PLEASED WITH YOU.


ONE COW WOULD BE A FAIR OFFER.
THE COW IS THE ROOT OF PROSPERITY. THE COW YIELDS THAT STRENGTH-GIVING NECTAR—MILK. THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WORLD TO EQUAL THE COW.


GIVE THESE KAIVARTAS THIS BLESSED ANIMAL FOR THEIR TROUBLE.


AT ONCE, NAHUSHA ARRANGED FOR THE COW TO BE GIVEN TO THE KAIVARTAS. CHYAVANA AND THE ASCETIC THEN BLESSED HIM...
...AND WENT THEIR WAYS.


THE CURSE
NAHUSHA WAS THE IDEAL KING. BY HIS GOOD DEEDS AND UNMATCHED VALOUR, HE DAZZLED EVEN THE DENIZENS OF HEAVEN.
SO, WHEN INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, WAS DEPRIVED OF HIS THRONE BY A CURSE, THEY CHOSE NAHUSHA AS THEIR NEXT KING.
HAVING INVITED HIM TO HEAVEN, THE DEVAS GRANTED NAHUSHA MANY BOONS AND GAVE HIM THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY TO DRINK.
THEN BRAHMA BLESSED HIM WITH THE MOST POWERFUL BOON OF ALL.
MAY ALL WHO COME WITHIN THE RANGE OF YOUR VISION BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR ENERGY AND COME UNDER YOUR SWAY.
DESPITE ALL THIS, NAHUSHA, WITH HUMBLE DEVOTION, CONTINUED TO WORSHIP THE DEVAS AS HE HAD DONE ON EARTH...
...AND IN THE COURT, THE DEVAS BOWED TO HIM.
AND SO IT WENT ON


THEN ONE DAY IN THE MIDST OF HIS WORSHIP NAHUSHA SUDDENLY STOPPED AND OPENED HIS EYES.
WHY AM I WORSHIPPING THE DEVAS? I AM THEIR KING.
THEY MUST NOT ONLY BOW BEFORE ME, THEY SHOULD ALSO SERVE ME.

CONTD ON PAGE 19

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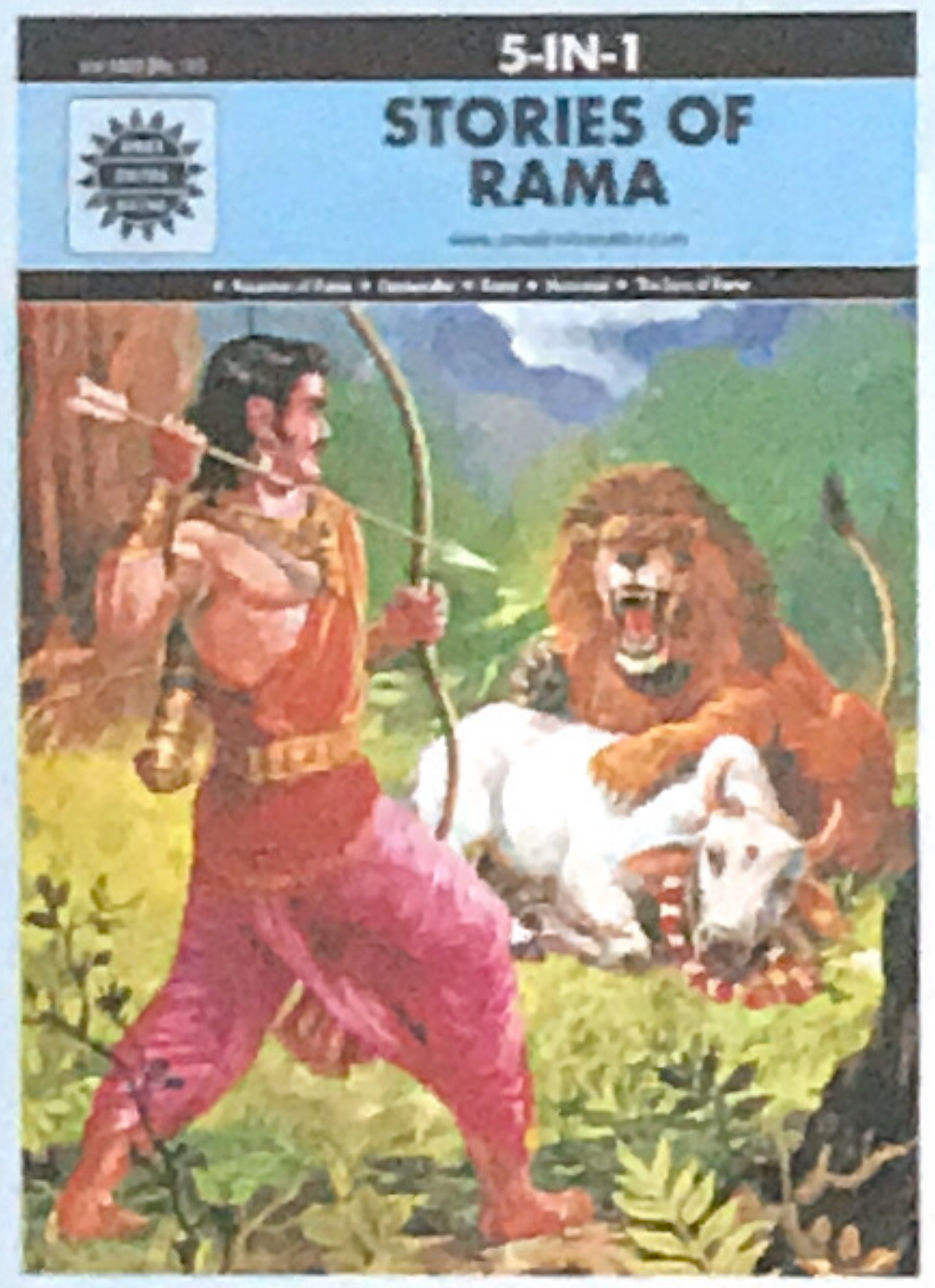
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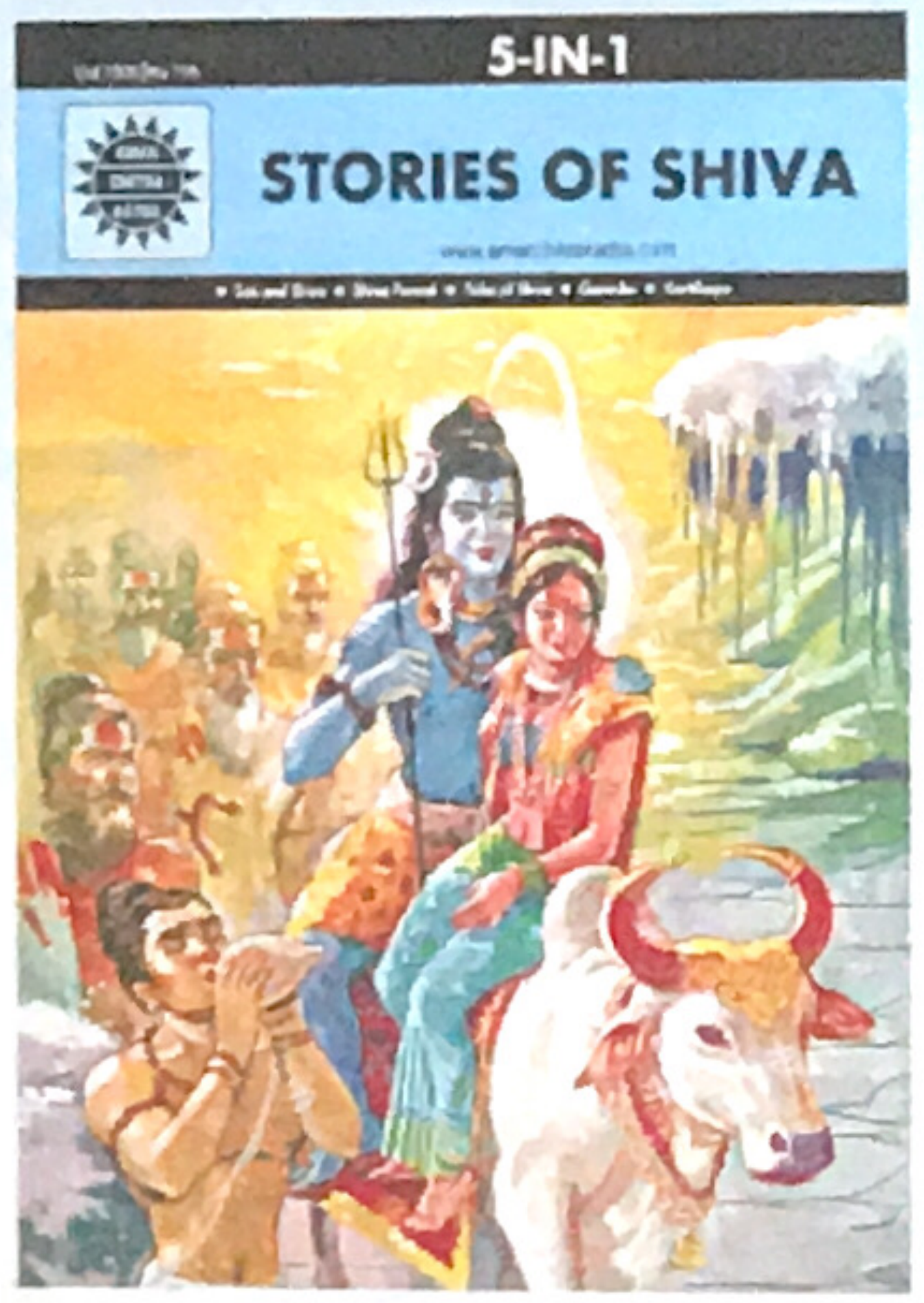
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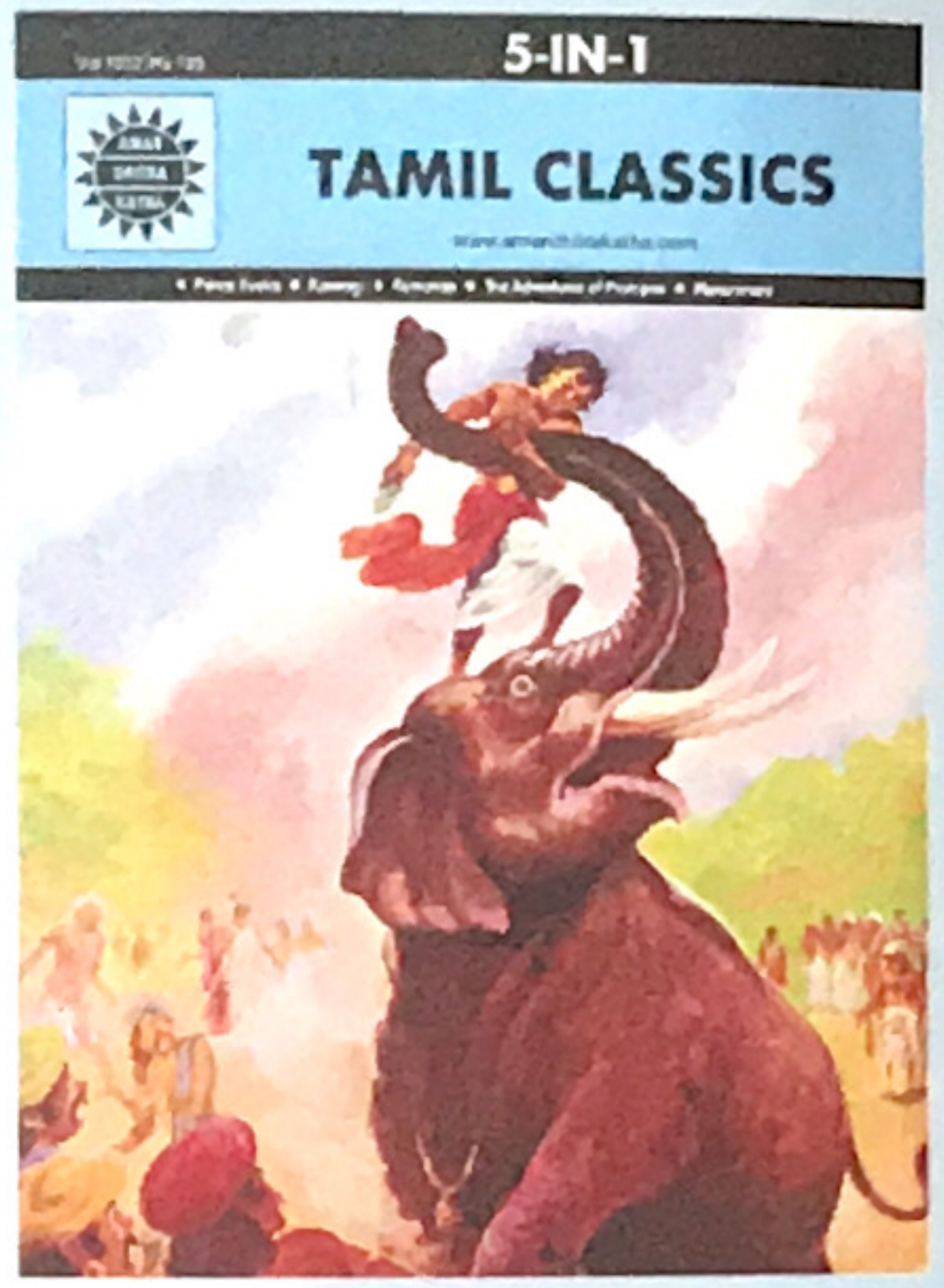
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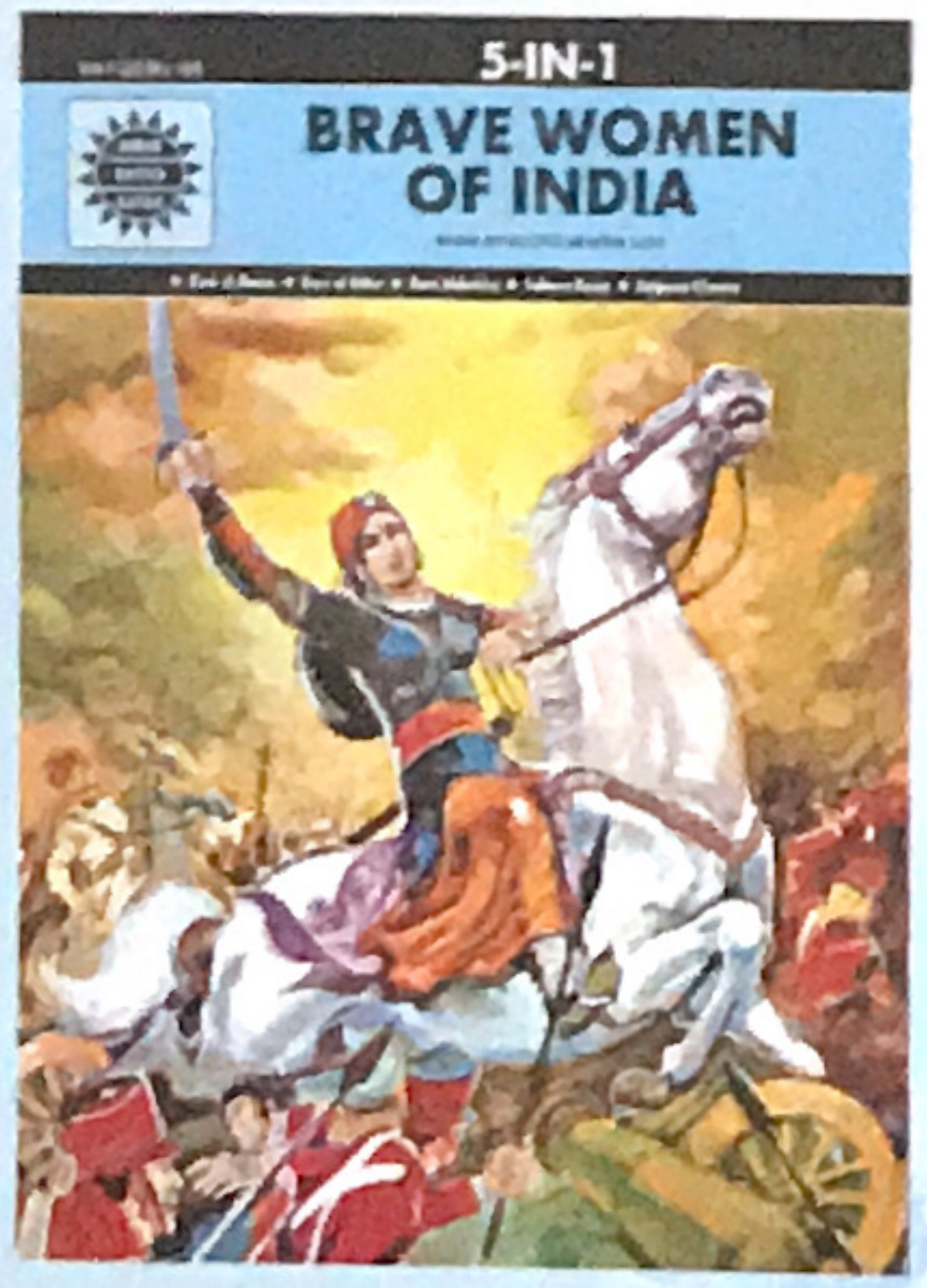
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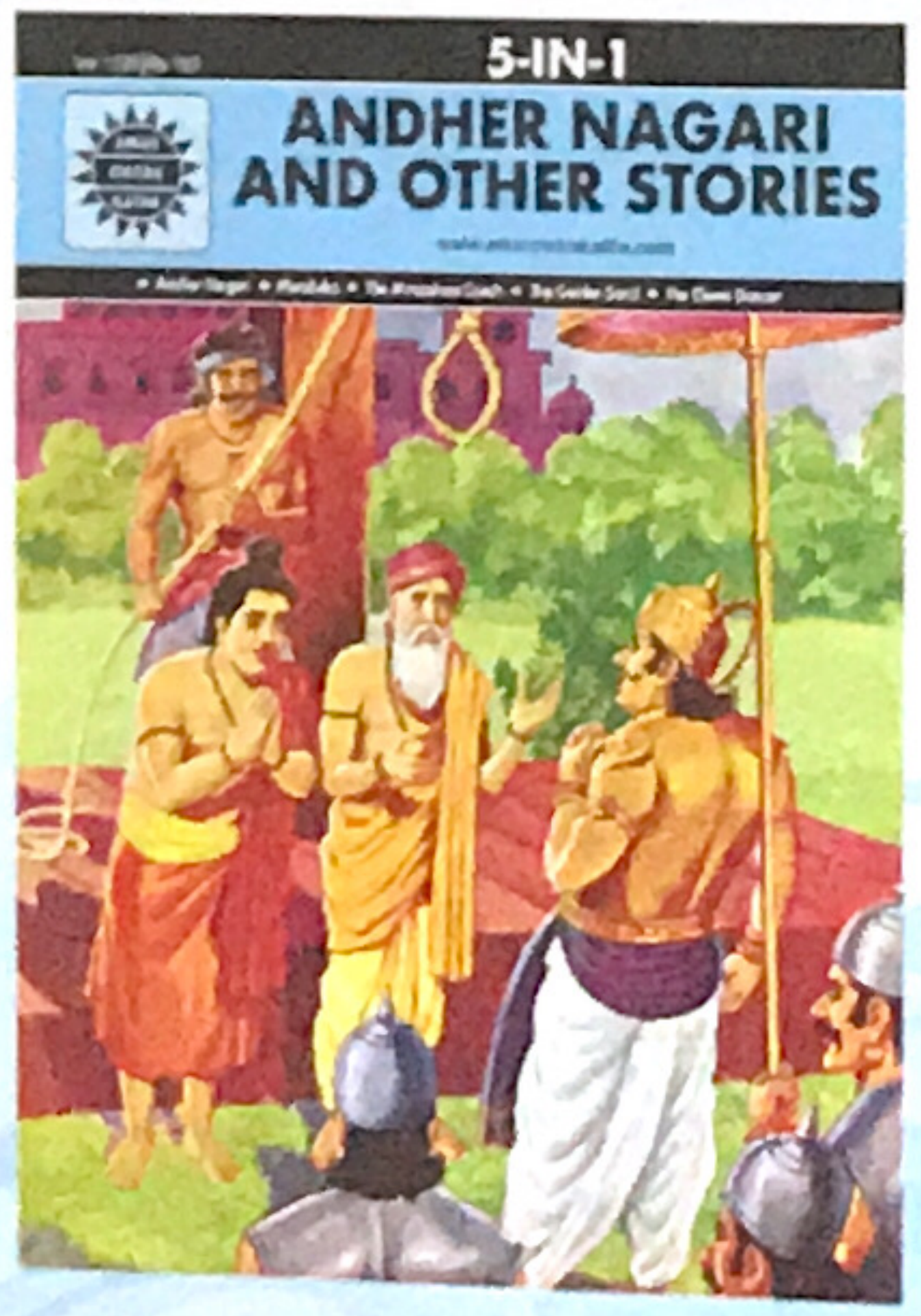
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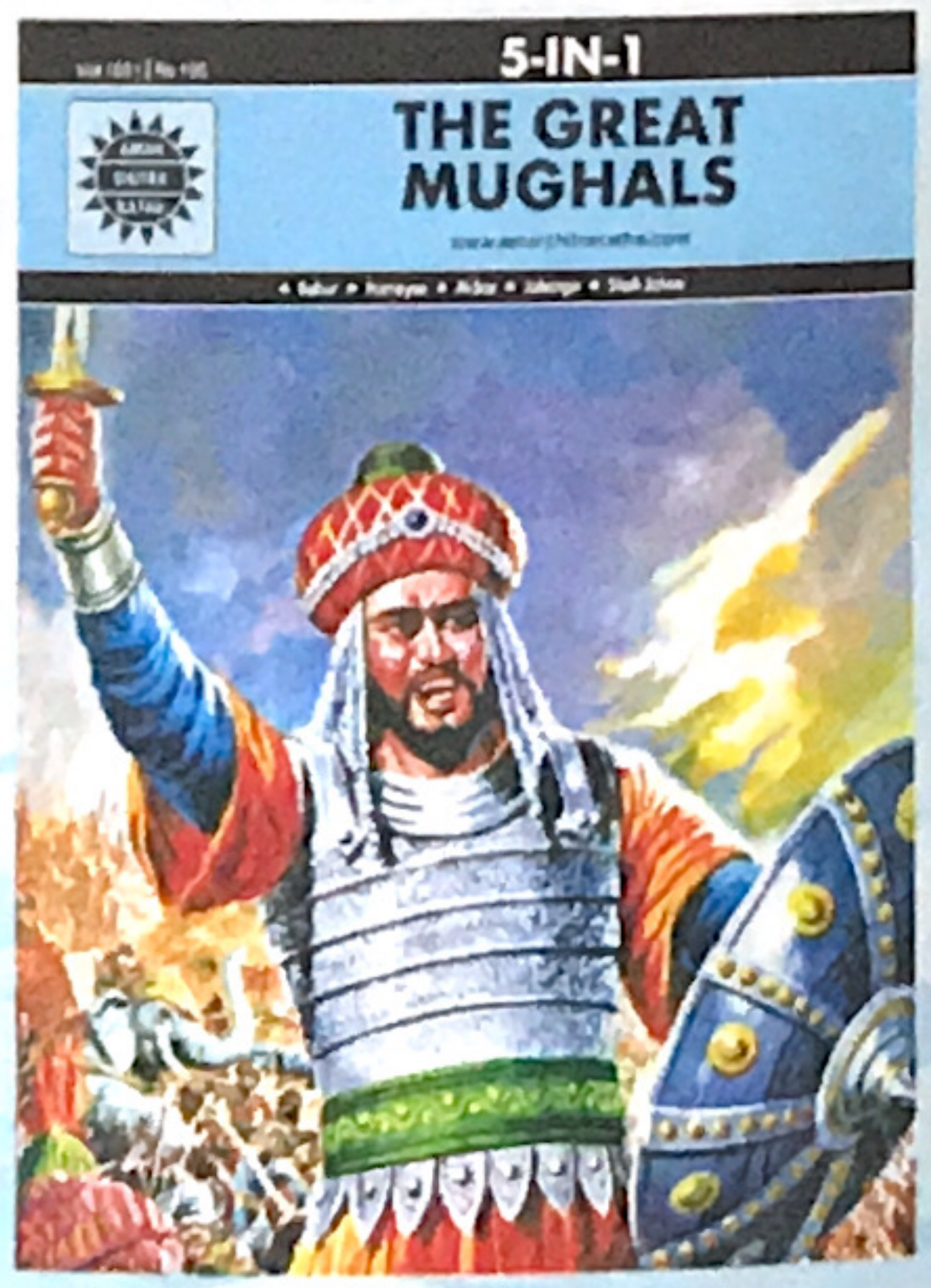
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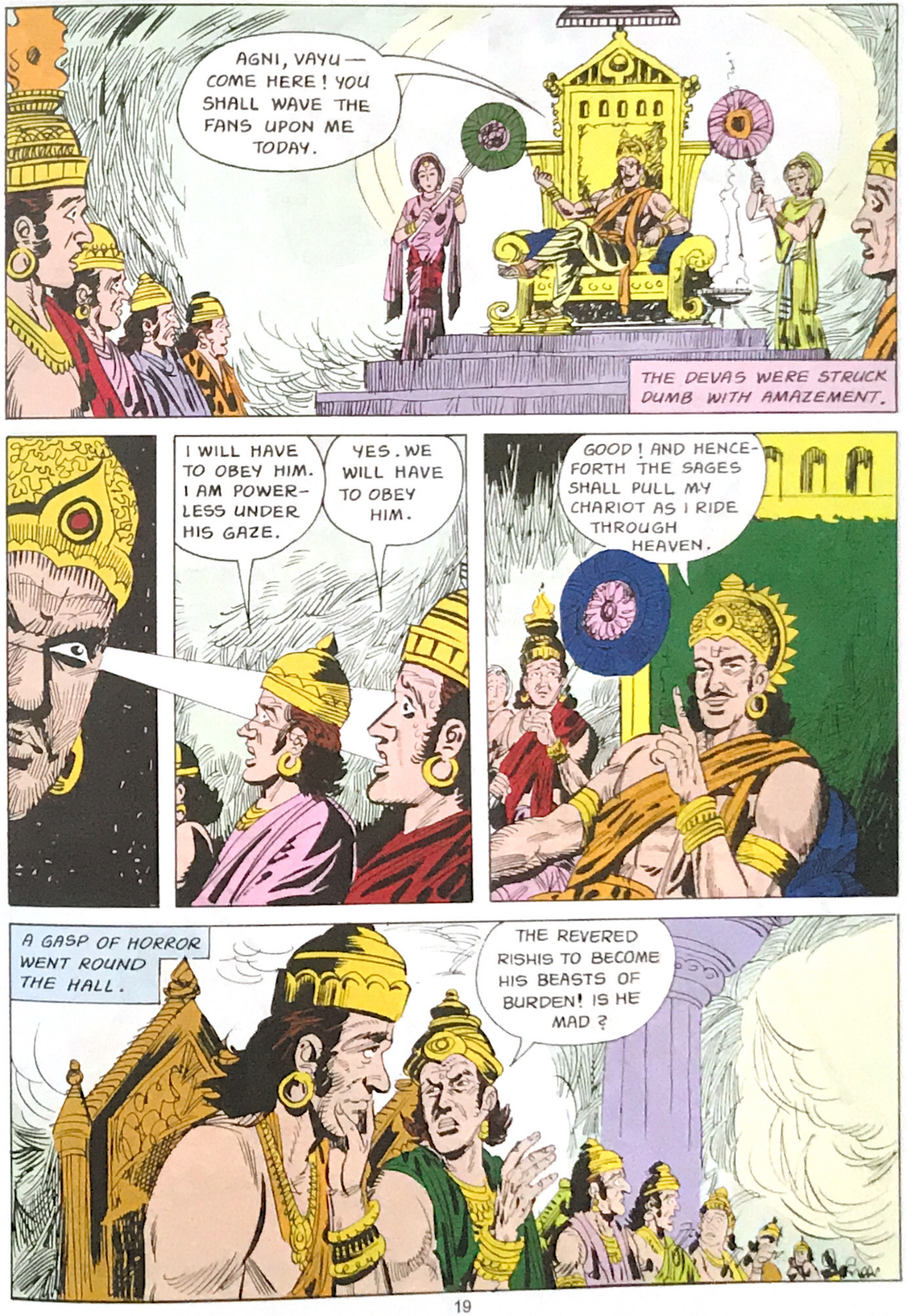
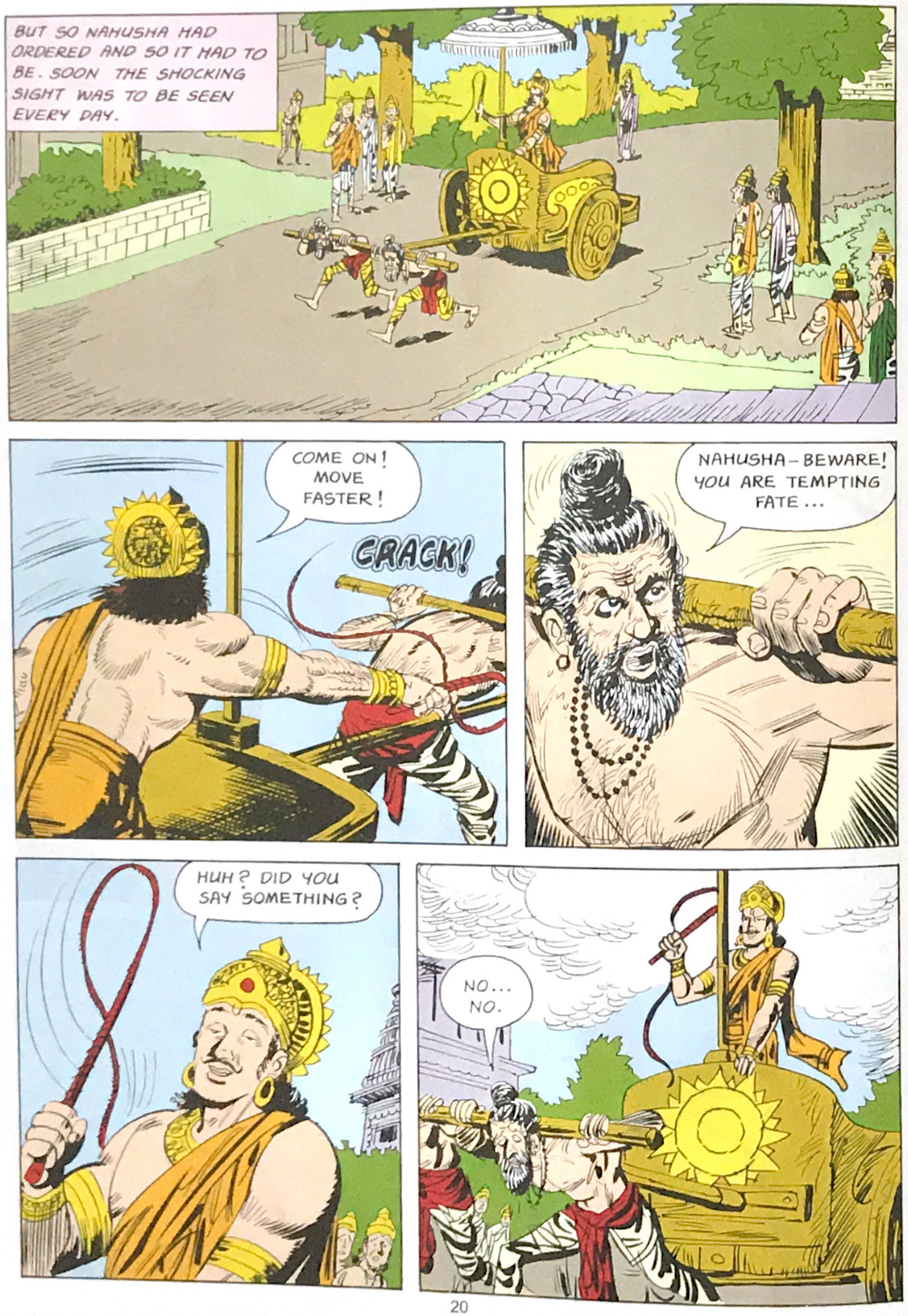
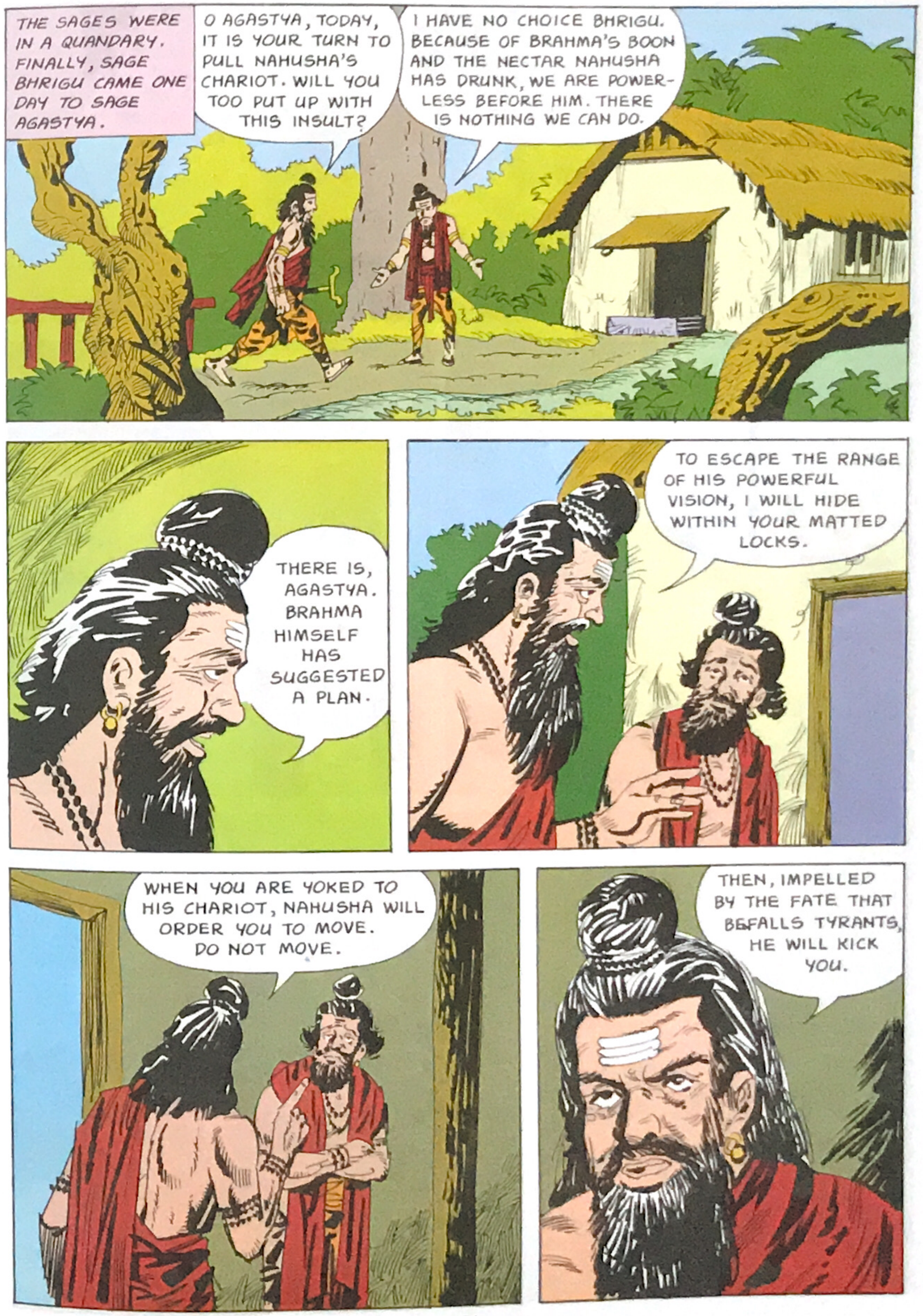
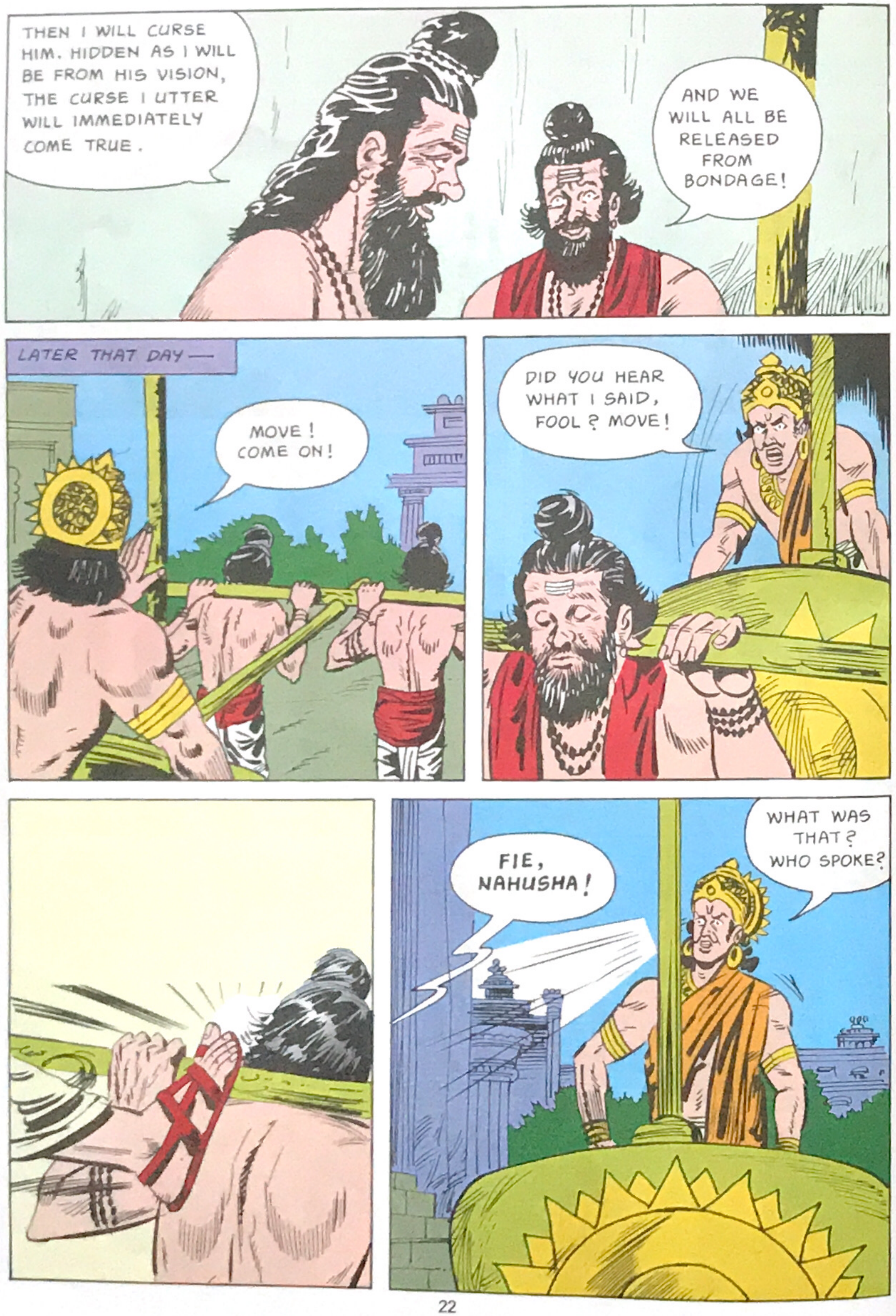
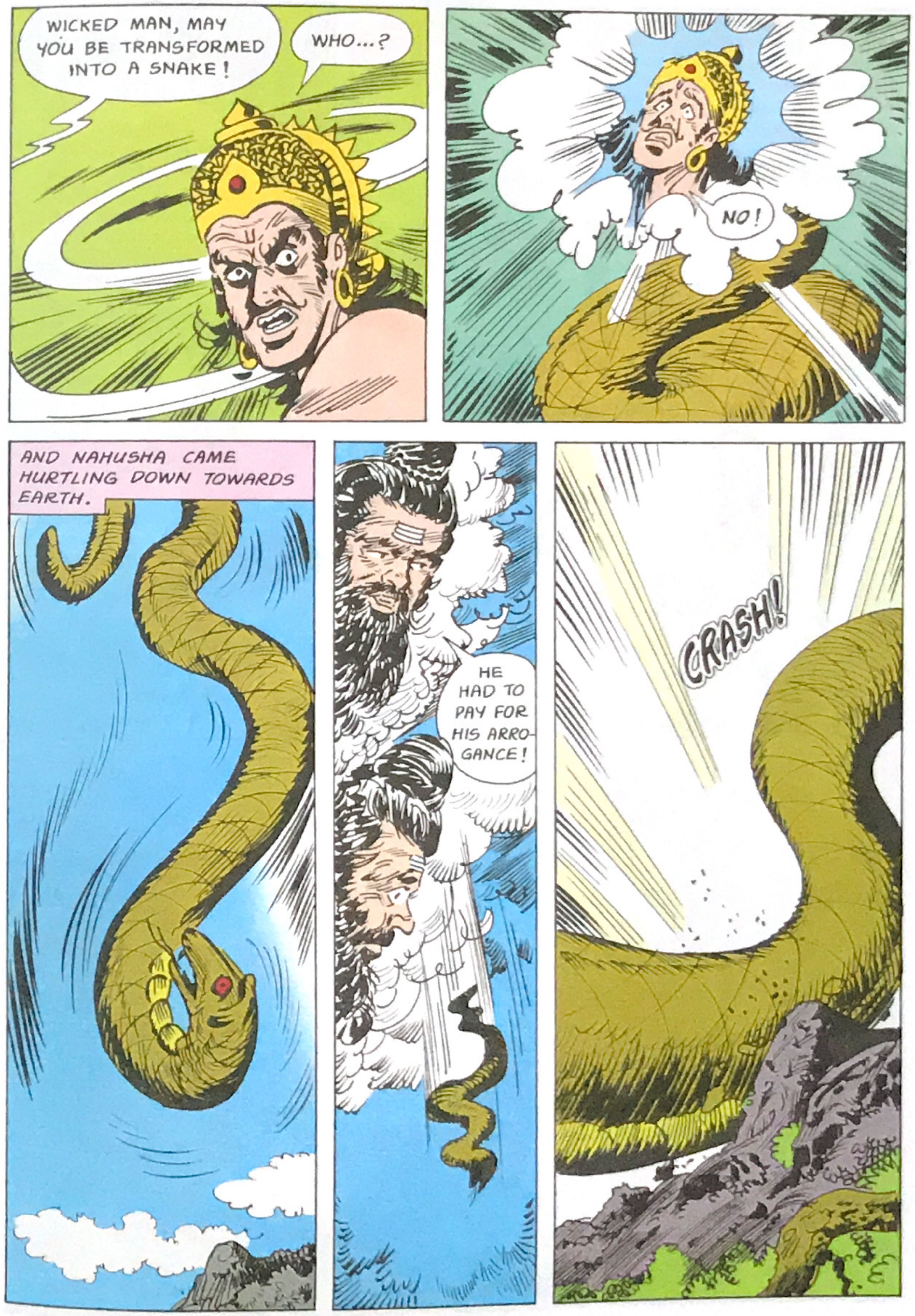
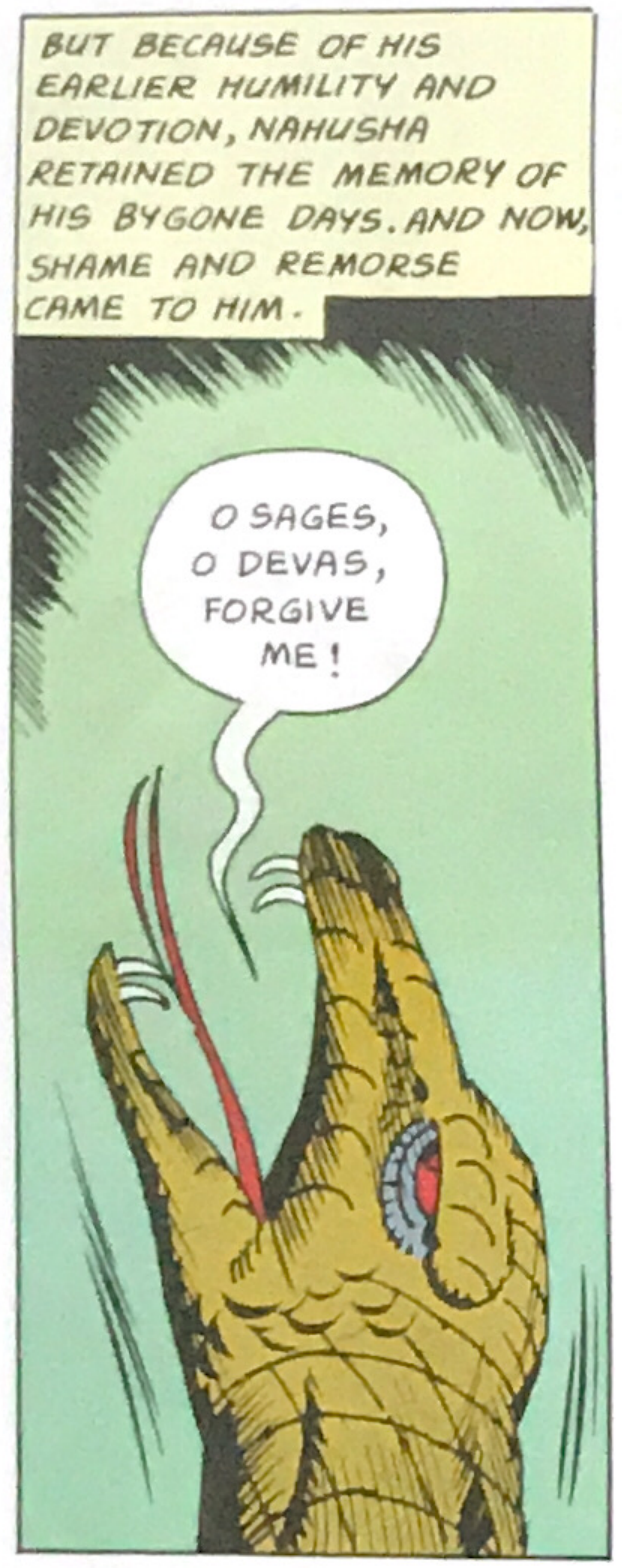

AGNI, VAYU — COME HERE! YOU SHALL WAVE THE FANS UPON ME TODAY.
THE DEVAS WERE STRUCK DUMB WITH AMAZEMENT.
I WILL HAVE TO OBEY HIM. I AM POWERLESS UNDER HIS GAZE.
YES. WE WILL HAVE TO OBEY HIM.
GOOD! AND HENCEFORTH THE SAGES SHALL PULL MY CHARIOT AS I RIDE THROUGH HEAVEN.
A GASP OF HORROR WENT ROUND THE HALL.
THE REVERED RISHIS TO BECOME HIS BEASTS OF BURDEN! IS HE MAD?


BUT SO NAHUSHA HAD ORDERED AND SO IT HAD TO BE. SOON THE SHOCKING SIGHT WAS TO BE SEEN EVERY DAY.
COME ON! MOVE FASTER!
CRACK!
NAHUSHA - BEWARE! YOU ARE TEMPTING FATE...
HUH? DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
NO... NO.


THE SAGES WERE IN A QUANDARY. FINALLY, SAGE BHRIGU CAME ONE DAY TO SAGE AGASTYA.
O AGASTYA, TODAY, IT IS YOUR TURN TO PULL NAHUSHA'S CHARIOT. WILL YOU TOO PUT UP WITH THIS INSULT?
I HAVE NO CHOICE BHRIGU. BECAUSE OF BRAHMA'S BOON AND THE NECTAR NAHUSHA HAS DRUNK, WE ARE POWERLESS BEFORE HIM. THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO.
THERE IS, AGASTYA. BRAHMA HIMSELF HAS SUGGESTED A PLAN.
TO ESCAPE THE RANGE OF HIS POWERFUL VISION, I WILL HIDE WITHIN YOUR MATTED LOCKS.
WHEN YOU ARE YOKED TO HIS CHARIOT, NAHUSHA WILL ORDER YOU TO MOVE. DO NOT MOVE.
THEN, IMPELLED BY THE FATE THAT BEFALLS TYRANTS, HE WILL KICK YOU.

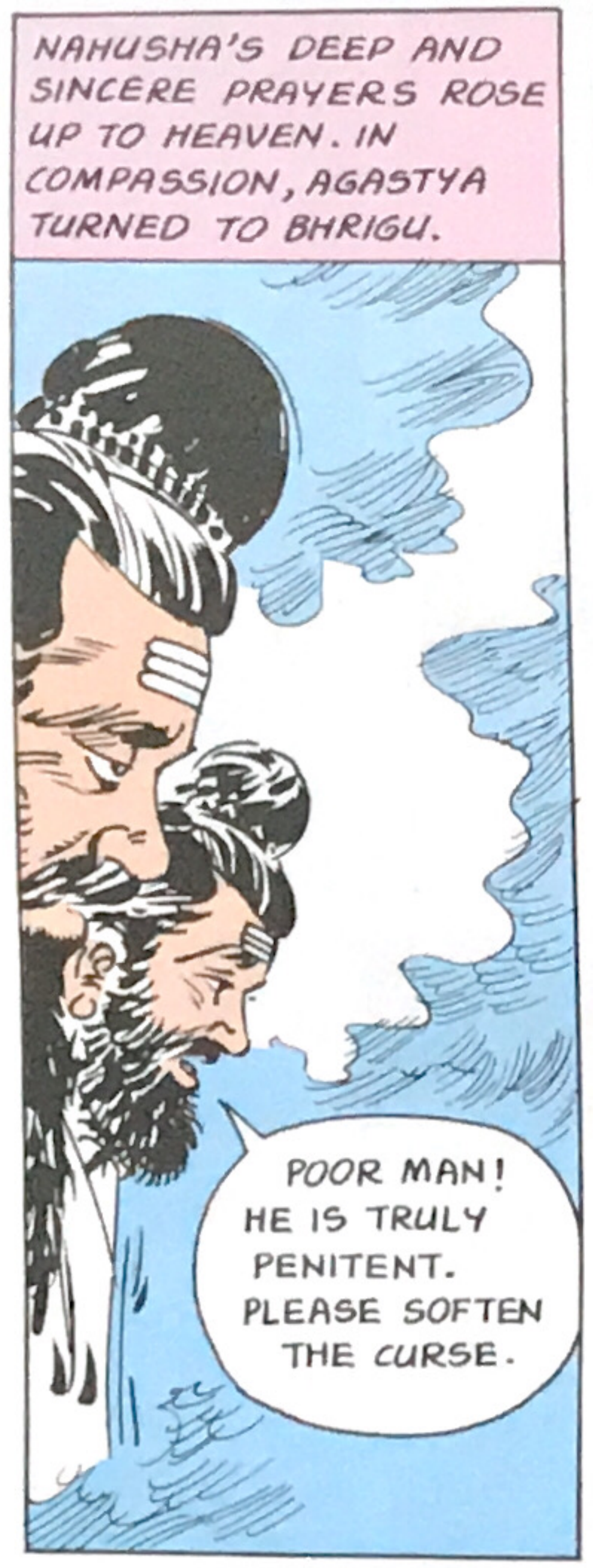

THEN I WILL CURSE HIM. HIDDEN AS I WILL BE FROM HIS VISION, THE CURSE I UTTER WILL IMMEDIATELY COME TRUE.
AND WE WILL ALL BE RELEASED FROM BONDAGE!
LATER THAT DAY—
MOVE! COME ON!
DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID, FOOL? MOVE!
FIE, NAHUSHA!
WHAT WAS THAT? WHO SPOKE?


WICKED MAN, MAY YOU BE TRANSFORMED INTO A SNAKE!
WHO...?
NO!
AND NAHUSHA CAME HURTLING DOWN TOWARDS EARTH.
HE HAD TO PAY FOR HIS ARROGANCE!
CRASH!



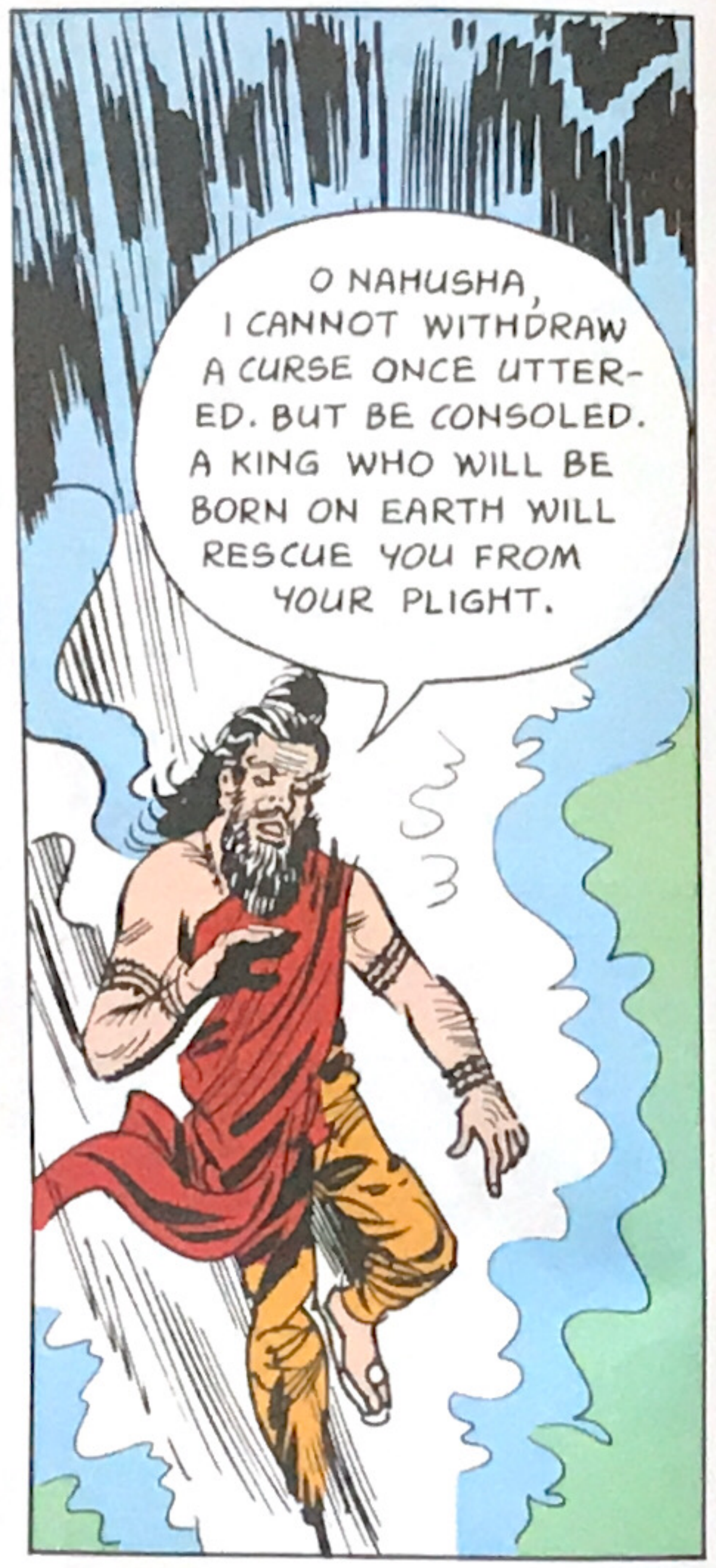
BUT BECAUSE OF HIS EARLIER HUMILITY AND DEVOTION, NAHUSHA RETAINED THE MEMORY OF HIS BYGONE DAYS. AND NOW, SHAME AND REMORSE CAME TO HIM.

O SAGES, O DEVAS, FORGIVE ME!

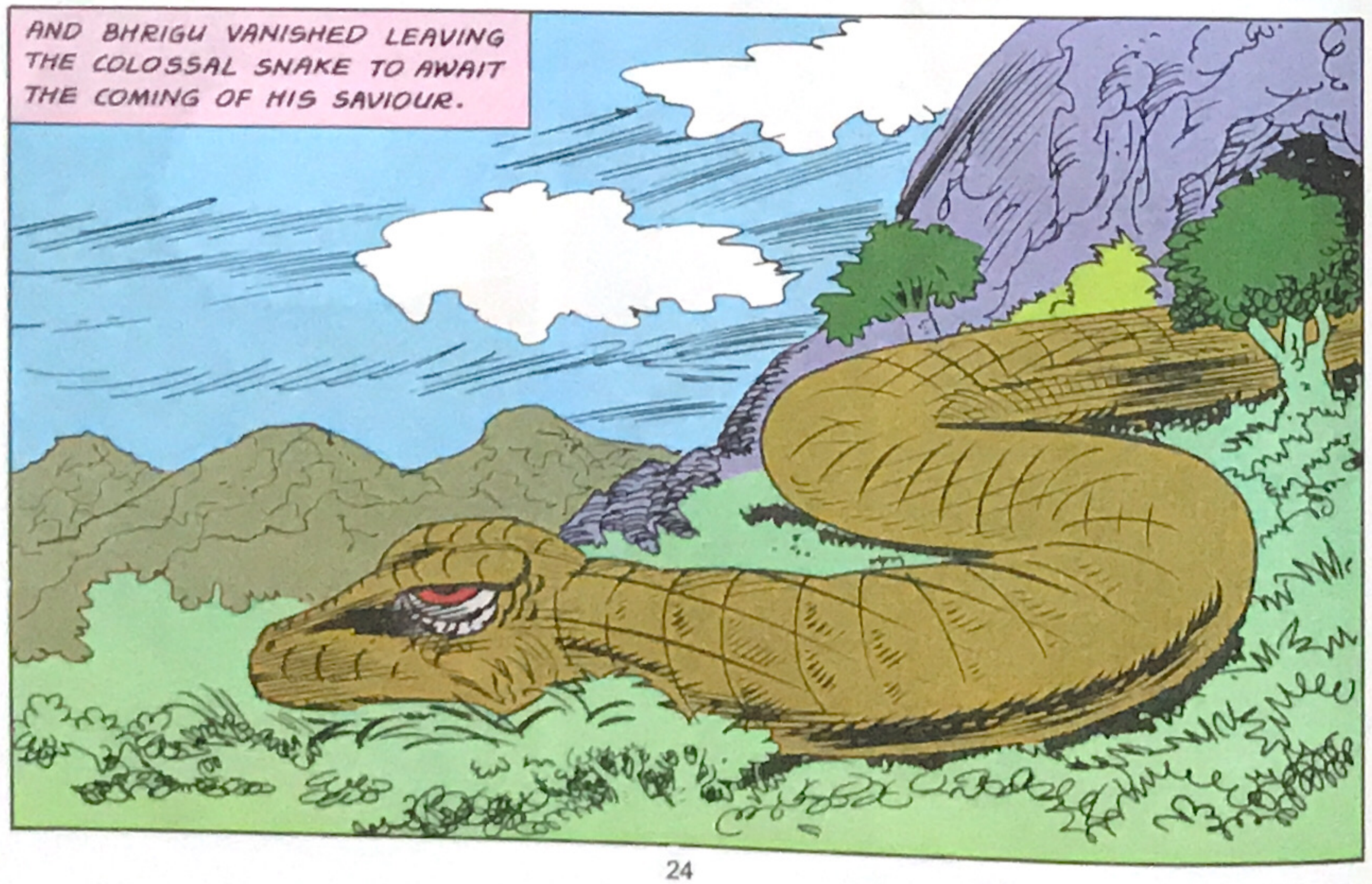


NAHUSHA'S DEEP AND SINCERE PRAYERS ROSE UP TO HEAVEN. IN COMPASSION, AGASTYA TURNED TO BHRIGU.

POOR MAN! HE IS TRULY PENITENT. PLEASE SOFTEN THE CURSE.

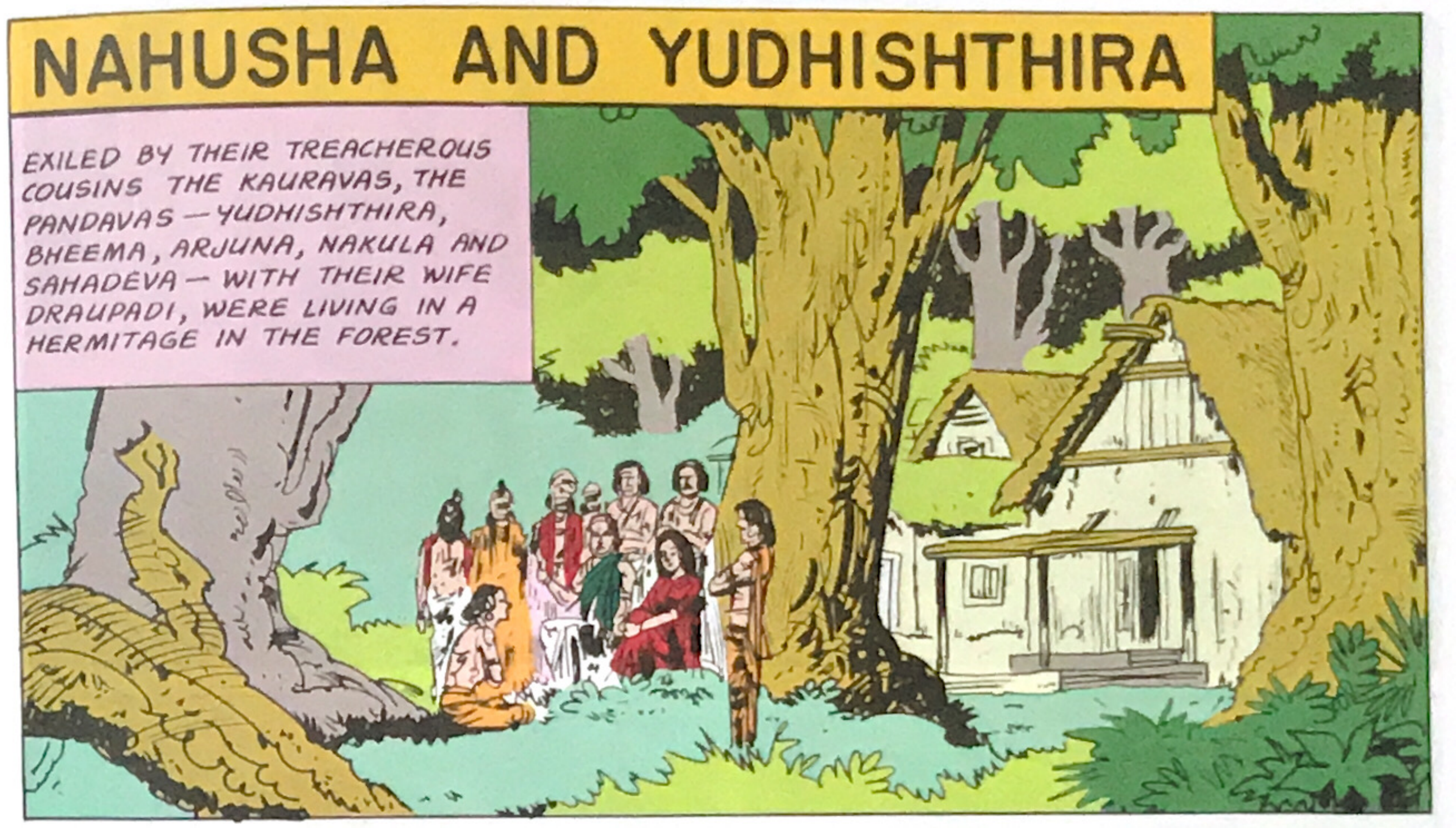


O NAHUSHA, I CANNOT WITHDRAW A CURSE ONCE UTTERED. BUT BE CONSOLED. A KING WHO WILL BE BORN ON EARTH WILL RESCUE YOU FROM YOUR PLIGHT.

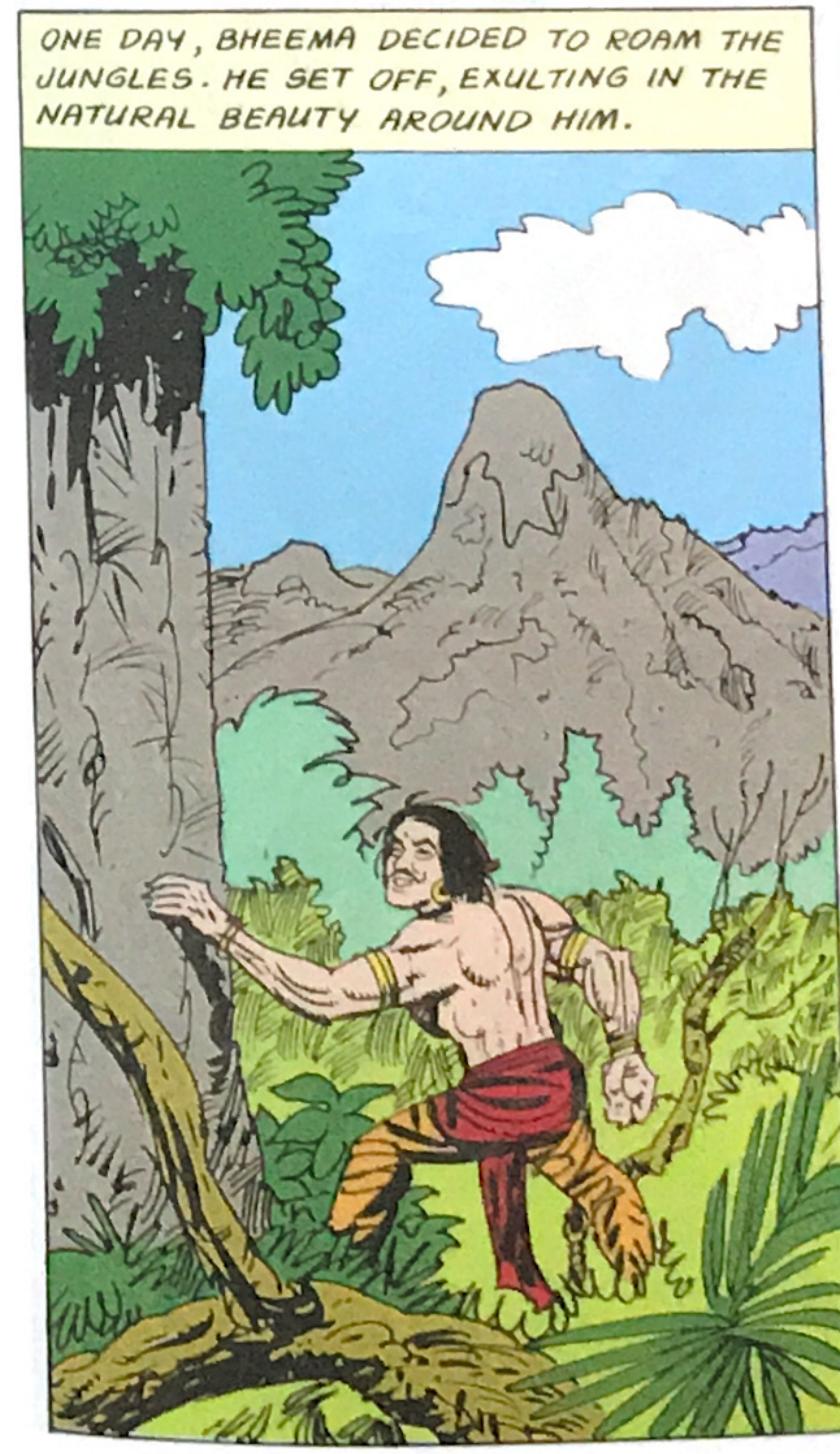


AND BHRIGU VANISHED LEAVING THE COLOSSAL SNAKE TO AWAIT THE COMING OF HIS SAVIOUR.

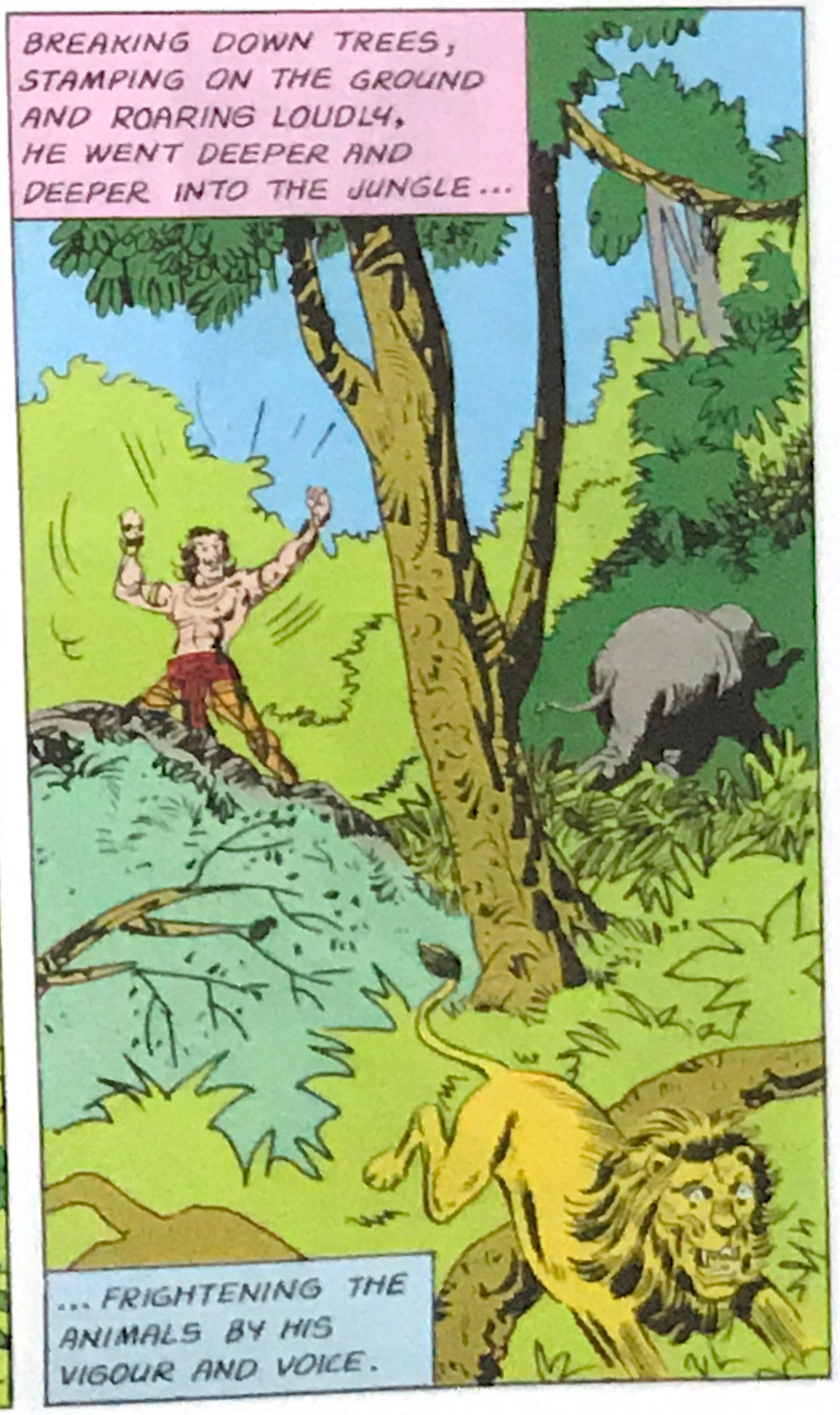
NAHUSHA AND YUDHISHTHIRA



EXILED BY THEIR TREACHEROUS COUSINS THE KAURAVAS, THE PANDAVAS — YUDHISHTHIRA, BHEEMA, ARJUNA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA — WITH THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI, WERE LIVING IN A HERMITAGE IN THE FOREST.

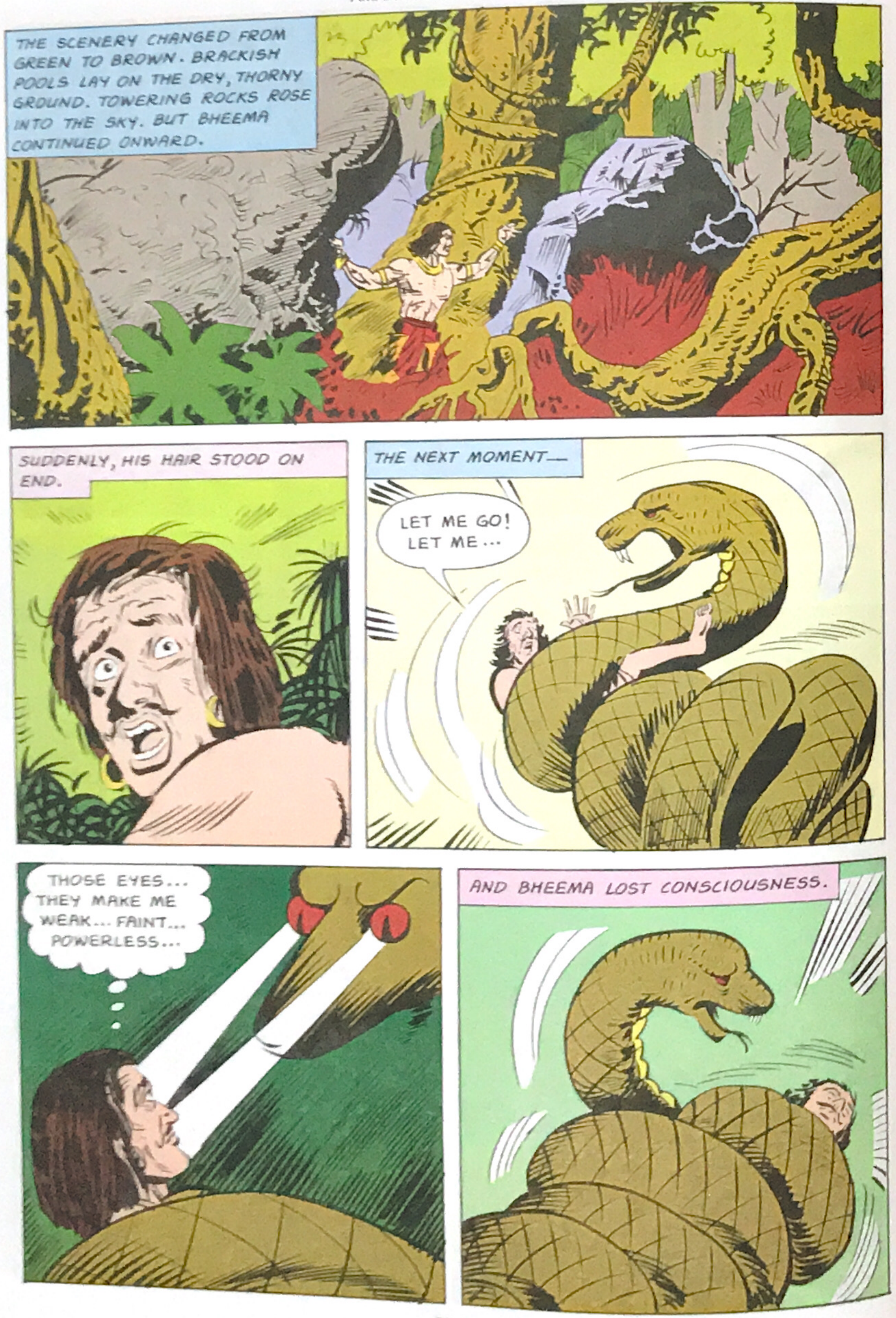


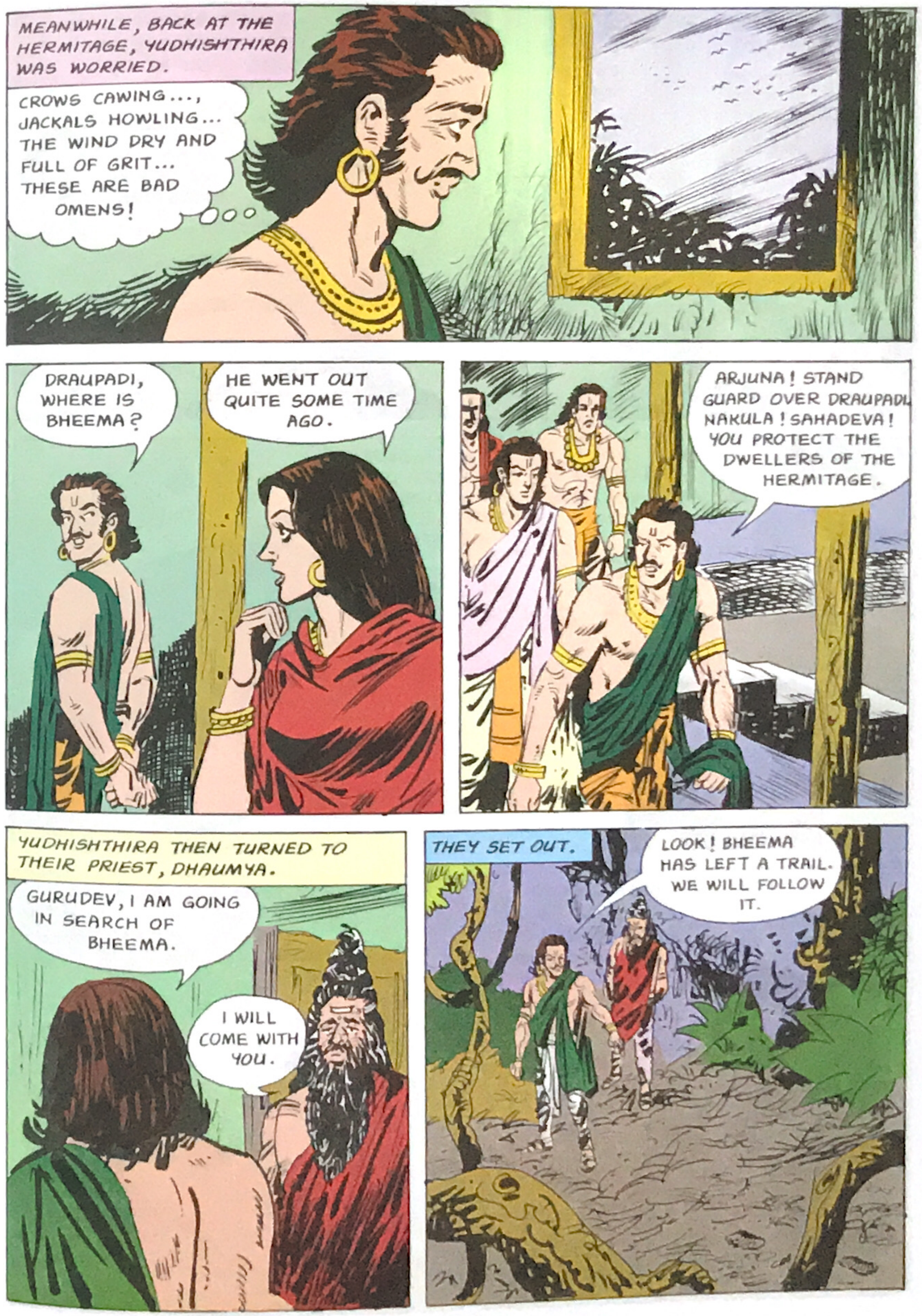
ONE DAY, BHEEMA DECIDED TO ROAM THE JUNGLES. HE SET OFF, EXULTING IN THE NATURAL BEAUTY AROUND HIM.

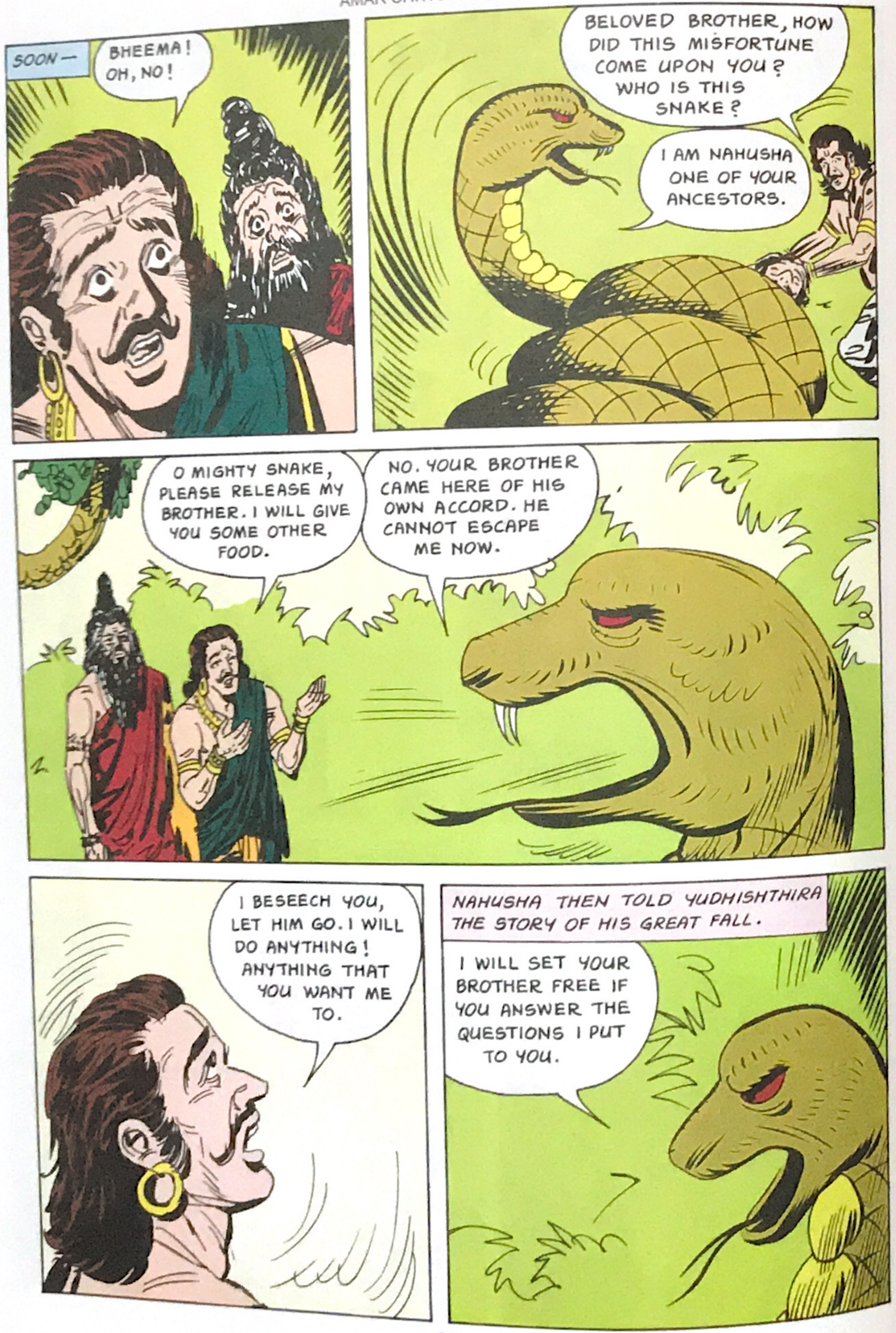


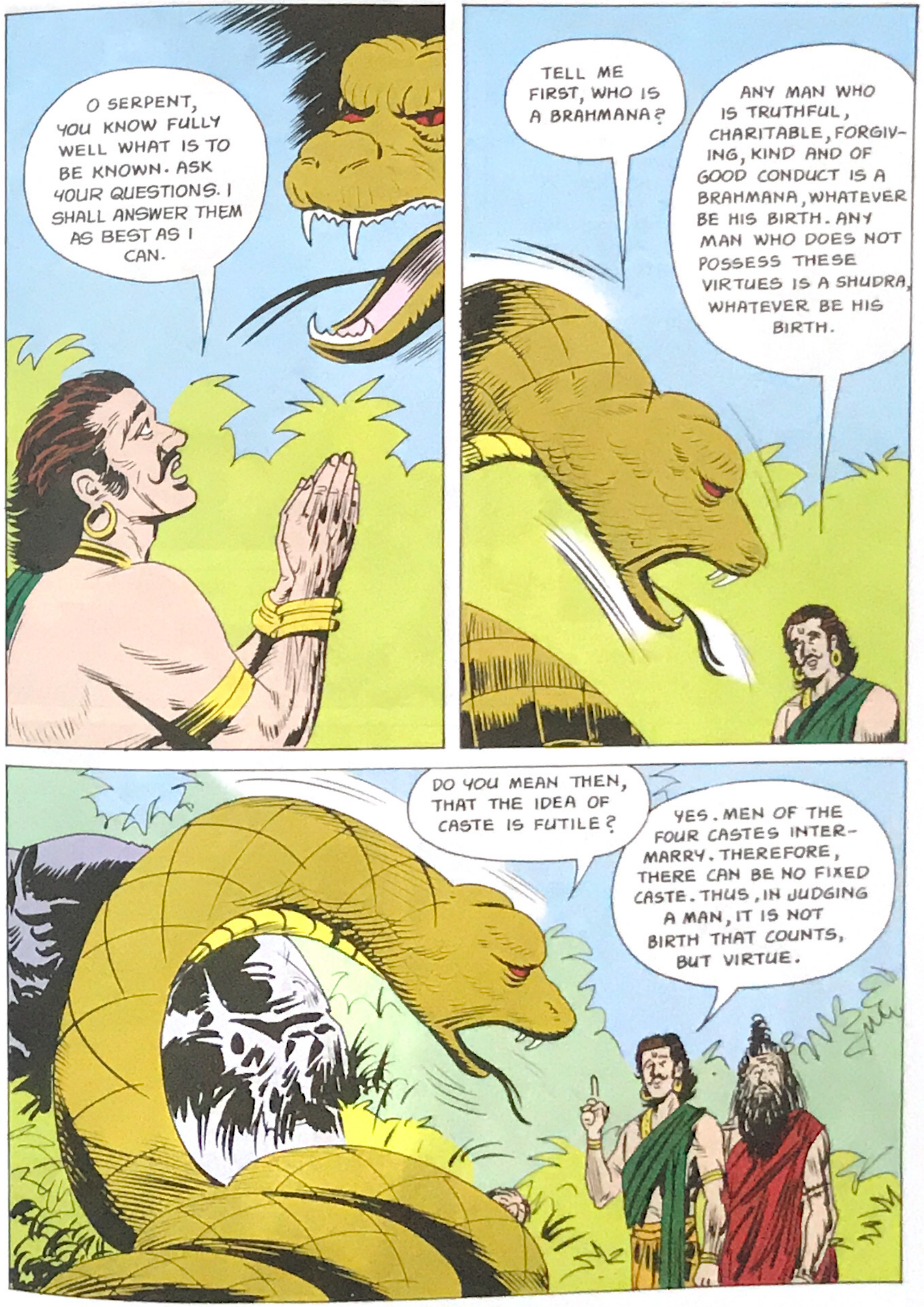
BREAKING DOWN TREES, STAMPING ON THE GROUND AND ROARING LOUDLY, HE WENT DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE JUNGLE ...

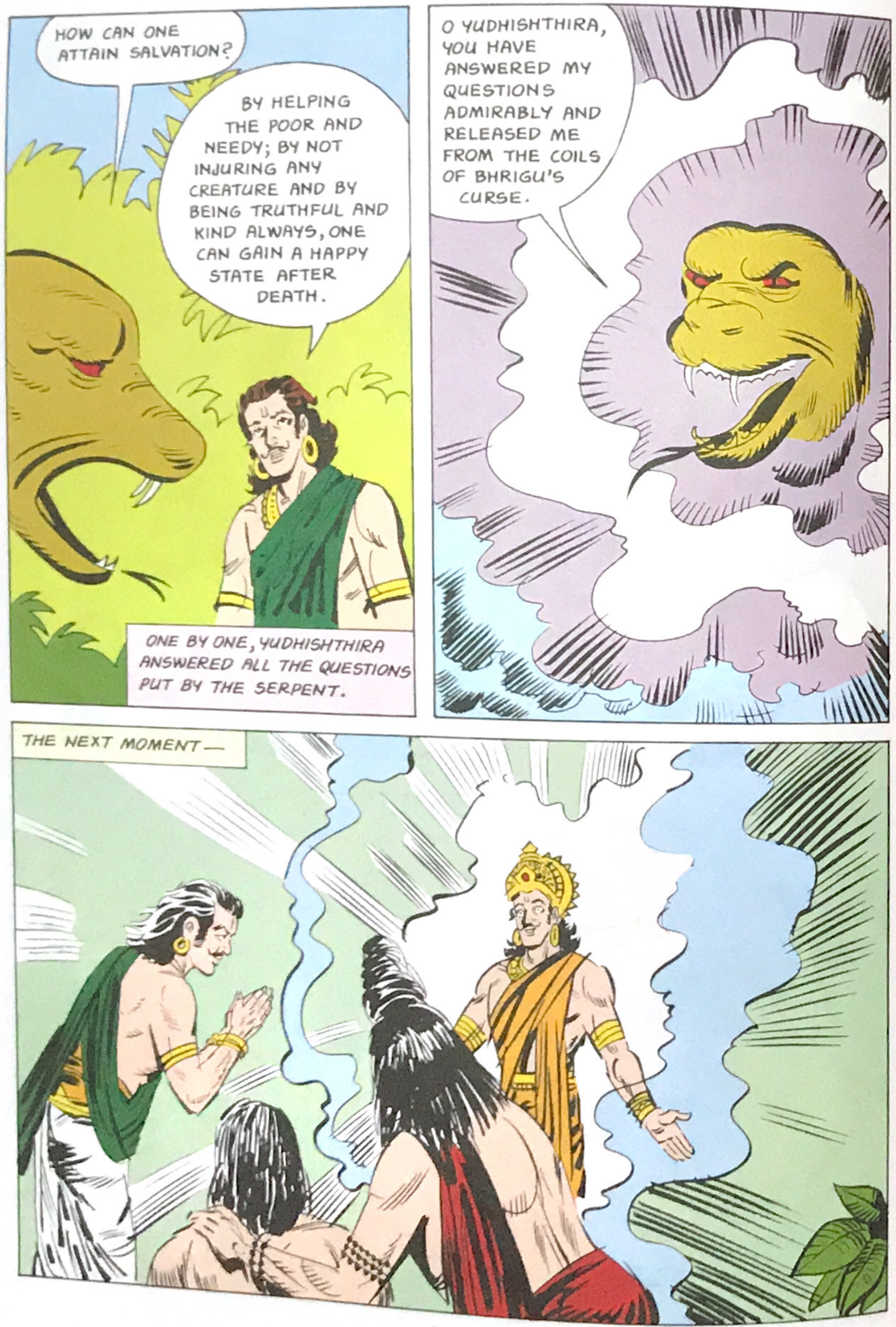
... FRIGHTENING THE ANIMALS BY HIS VIGOUR AND VOICE.

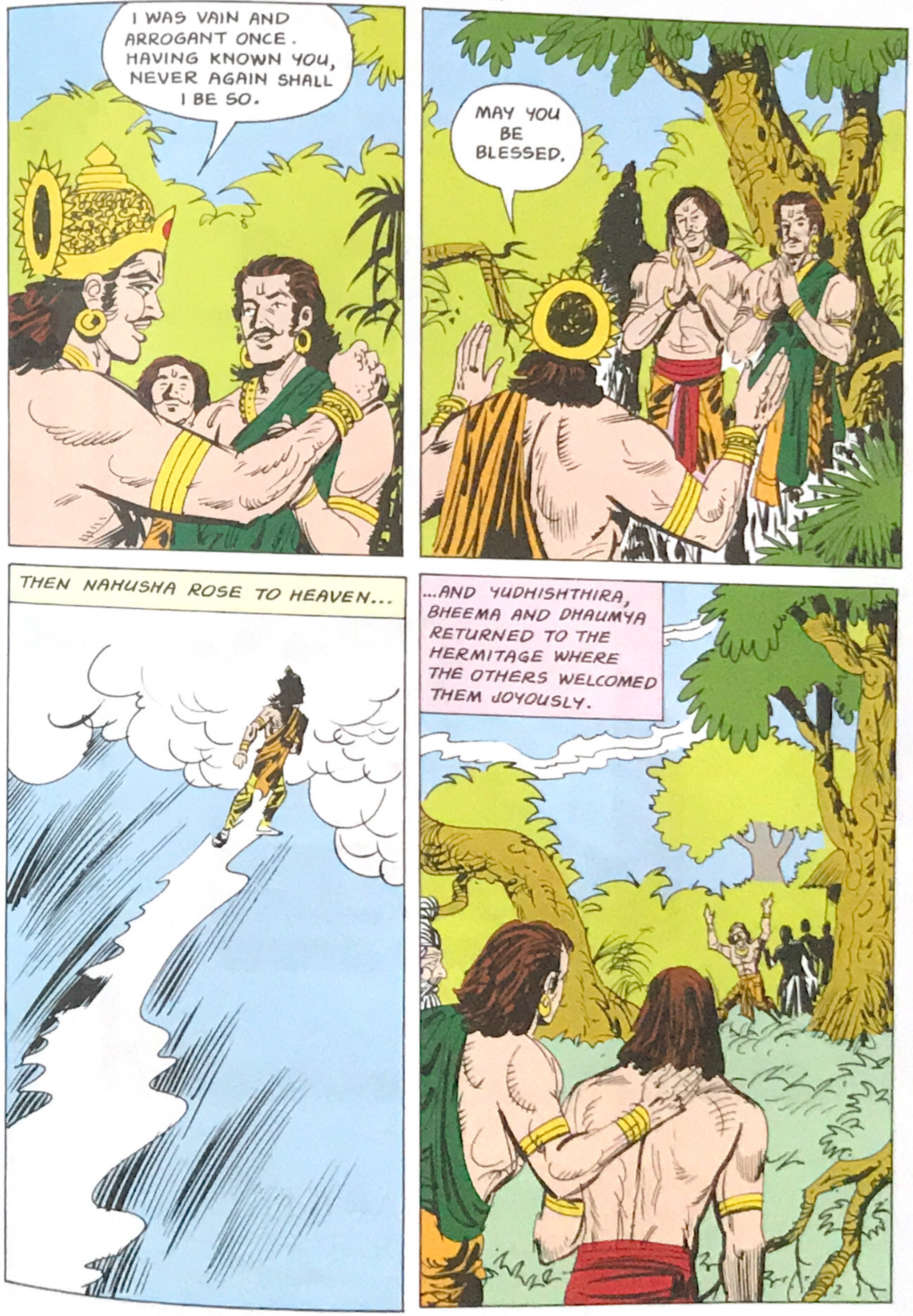

THE SCENERY CHANGED FROM GREEN TO BROWN. BRACKISH POOLS LAY ON THE DRY, THORNY GROUND. TOWERING ROCKS ROSE INTO THE SKY. BUT BHEEMA CONTINUED ONWARD.
SUDDENLY, HIS HAIR STOOD ON END.
THE NEXT MOMENT—
LET ME GO! LET ME...
THOSE EYES... THEY MAKE ME WEAK... FAINT... POWERLESS...
AND BHEEMA LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.


MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE HERMITAGE, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS WORRIED.
CROWS CAWING..., JACKALS HOWLING... THE WIND DRY AND FULL OF GRIT... THESE ARE BAD OMENS!
DRAUPADI, WHERE IS BHEEMA?
HE WENT OUT QUITE SOME TIME AGO.
ARJUNA! STAND GUARD OVER DRAUPADI. NAKULA! SAHADEVA! YOU PROTECT THE DWELLERS OF THE HERMITAGE.
YUDHISHTHIRA THEN TURNED TO THEIR PRIEST, DHAUMYA.
GURUDEV, I AM GOING IN SEARCH OF BHEEMA.
I WILL COME WITH YOU.
THEY SET OUT.
LOOK! BHEEMA HAS LEFT A TRAIL. WE WILL FOLLOW IT.


SOON—
BHEEMA! OH, NO!
BELOVED BROTHER, HOW DID THIS MISFORTUNE COME UPON YOU? WHO IS THIS SNAKE?
I AM NAHUSHA ONE OF YOUR ANCESTORS.
O MIGHTY SNAKE, PLEASE RELEASE MY BROTHER. I WILL GIVE YOU SOME OTHER FOOD.
NO. YOUR BROTHER CAME HERE OF HIS OWN ACCORD. HE CANNOT ESCAPE ME NOW.
I BESEECH YOU, LET HIM GO. I WILL DO ANYTHING! ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT ME TO.
NAHUSHA THEN TOLD YUDHISHTHIRA THE STORY OF HIS GREAT FALL.
I WILL SET YOUR BROTHER FREE IF YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONS I PUT TO YOU.


O SERPENT, YOU KNOW FULLY WELL WHAT IS TO BE KNOWN. ASK YOUR QUESTIONS. I SHALL ANSWER THEM AS BEST AS I CAN.
TELL ME FIRST, WHO IS A BRAHMANA?
ANY MAN WHO IS TRUTHFUL, CHARITABLE, FORGIVING, KIND AND OF GOOD CONDUCT IS A BRAHMANA, WHATEVER BE HIS BIRTH. ANY MAN WHO DOES NOT POSSESS THESE VIRTUES IS A SHUDRA, WHATEVER BE HIS BIRTH.
DO YOU MEAN THEN, THAT THE IDEA OF CASTE IS FUTILE?
YES. MEN OF THE FOUR CASTES INTERMARRY. THEREFORE, THERE CAN BE NO FIXED CASTE. THUS, IN JUDGING A MAN, IT IS NOT BIRTH THAT COUNTS, BUT VIRTUE.


HOW CAN ONE ATTAIN SALVATION?
BY HELPING THE POOR AND NEEDY; BY NOT INJURING ANY CREATURE AND BY BEING TRUTHFUL AND KIND ALWAYS, ONE CAN GAIN A HAPPY STATE AFTER DEATH.
ONE BY ONE, YUDHISHTHIRA ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS PUT BY THE SERPENT.
O YUDHISHTHIRA, YOU HAVE ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS ADMIRABLY AND RELEASED ME FROM THE COILS OF BHRIGU'S CURSE.
THE NEXT MOMENT —


I WAS VAIN AND ARROGANT ONCE. HAVING KNOWN YOU, NEVER AGAIN SHALL I BE SO.
MAY YOU BE BLESSED.
THEN NAHUSHA ROSE TO HEAVEN...
...AND YUDHISHTHIRA, BHEEMA AND DHAUMYA RETURNED TO THE HERMITAGE WHERE THE OTHERS WELCOMED THEM JOYOUSLY.